FROM PAST TO PRESENT
A PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATION IN TURKEY: VILLAGE GUARD SYSTEM

ŞEMSA ÖZAR NESRİN UÇARLAR OSMAN AYTAR

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with the contributions of

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I. PREFACE

The paramilitary organizations that the state has established by arming the civilian population for the sake of public security has a long history in Turkey. During the Ottoman Empire era, groups known as Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments, which predominantly consisted of Kurdish tribes, were armed against the perceived enemies of the Ottomans, primarily against Armenians. In the Republic era, this time a paramilitary organization consisting of Kurdish villagers was formed under the name of Temporary Village Guard System against the PKK uprising.

First official comprehensive alliance between the state and certain Kurdish tribes were realized with the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments[1] in 1891. This alliance also constituted one of the most critical turning points that made the disintegration of the Kurdish tribes permanent. From the dissolution of the regiments to the establishment of the Temporary Village Guard System in 1985, although not as comprehensive and regular as Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments and Temporary Village Guard System, the tribes living in Kurdistan were used as paramilitary groups in different ways, especially between the years 1920 and 1938.[2]

The legal basis of the Temporary Village Guard System was the Village Law numbered 442 that was legislated in 1924. On March 26, 1985 with the amendment made to the Article 74,[3] a paramilitary structure comprising temporary and voluntary village guards was established. During the 1990s when the clashes were at their peak, the number of this armed forces was over 90 thousand. The village guards were under the command of the village headman administratively and the Commander of the Gendarmerie Squad in professional matters.

For 15 years, this paramilitary system was directed without being subject to any law until the Regulations on Village Guard System,[4] which was published on the Official Gazette on July 1, 2000. Procedures and principles regarding the employment, duties, authorization to use guns, responsibilities, training, dismissal and other personnel rights and benefits of the village guards were specified by this regulation. The fact that it took such a long time to pass this regulation resulted in ambiguous duties of the village guards and gave the opportunity for the armed forces to use this unit as they please. The village guards, as their name suggests, were technically charged with the protection of their own villages. However, they were sent on operations that lasted for days, from time to time used as a human barrier between the soldiers and the PKK and were even included in cross-border operations. Additionally, many village guards

were employed in state-established institutions such as JITEM and involved in crimes such as unsolved murders, setting villages on fire, evacuation of villages, invasion of fields, murder, rape and drug trafficking.

The village guard system consists of temporary village guards and voluntary village guards. Temporary village guards acquire licensed guns, a monthly salary in which they are obliged to join the guard duties and operations in return. On the other hand, voluntary village guards do not receive any payment. They own a licensed gun provided by the gendarmerie and are charged with the protection of their own villages.

According to the official statistics, there are currently 46,195 temporary village guards within the borders of 22 cities[5] as of February 1, 2013.[6] Even though it does not appear in the official statistics, the number of voluntary village guards is estimated to be between 20 and 25 thousand.[7] It is also known that the state employed new village guards in recent months at a time when the "settlement process" was initiated.[8] During a period when both sides put down their arms, increasing the number of the village guards instead of discussing and planning by which means the village guard system will be dissolved demonstrates that this paramilitary organization is not only a military security force, but also has other functions for the state. For this reason, it is evident that the dissolution process of the village guard system will not be an easy task. We believe that the first step that needs to be taken for this dissolution process in the fastest way possible without giving any more casualties is to decipher what the system means to the actors, what purpose it serves, why it persists and why it is indispensable. In this respect, the aim of this research is to contribute to the accumulation of knowledge which we hope will accelerate the dissolution of this system that caused irreparable pain in Kurdistan.

This research is planned to consist of three stages. First chapter prepared by Osman Aytar aims to analyze the village guard system within an historical context. The historical context carries great importance for two reasons: The first one is the fact that the village guard system introduced in 1985 bears great resemblances to the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments that were established during the Ottoman period. Therefore, understanding the significance of this entity for the central government will provide us important clues in deciphering the village guard system that stands before us as a paramilitary force. The second historical context covers the last 30 years. Even though the village guard system

has been defined as "temporary" on legal grounds throughout these 30 years, what stands before us is an institutionalized paramilitary organization in which two, even three generations have been subjected to its effects. The reports and the discussions that took place in the National Assembly and the public regarding this system help us to evaluate this historical process from different point of views. In the second chapter prepared by Nesrin Uçarlar, discussions on the village guard system noted in the minutes of meeting of the National Assembly were examined and the members of the governing and opposition parties' approach to the subject for decades were analyzed in order to shed light on this period. In addition, the news archives were scanned in order to delineate the events related to the village guard system that were reported in press. Crimes committed by the village guards, testimonies of the victims and statements of the state authorities were reported through this analysis of archives while showing how the system was used to justify every kind of human rights violation.

In addition to the analysis of these archives a field research was conducted. The third chapter written by Şemsa Özar draws on this field research. Face-to-face interviews were made with the village guards and, when possible, their wives and children living in the different regions of Kurdistan. The interviewees were asked how they started working as a village guard, what they have been through, what they think about the system, their opinions on the crimes that were committed, rights and demands of the village guards and the abolition of the system among other related issues.

For a better understanding of how the system functions and the restoration of justice between the parties, uncovering the stories of the victims is crucial step. However, this research does not primarily aim to make a report of human rights violations caused by the village guards. Testimonies of the victims were only included in the part of this report where the news appearing in the press were analyzed. Various reports prepared by the human rights organizations on the human rights violations caused by the village guards since the implementation of the system until today provide a significant literature on the subject. Several NGO's such as IHD (Human Rights Association), GÖÇ-DER (Migrants Social Assistance and Cultural Association) and MAZLUM-DER (Organization for Human Rights and Solidarity with the Oppressed People) prepared important reports based on the applications of the victims and shared them with the public. These reports serve as a vital source for understanding the extent of the human rights

violations, oppression, torture, sexual harassment, rape and the massacres caused by the village guard system. The regional Bars and certain official commissions also collected important information based on the testimonies and the court records. Certainly, more research is needed to be done on this issue. The necessity to uncover the crimes and compensate the losses of the victims by means of establishing truth and reconciliation commissions is still valid.

As stated above, this research does not primarily aim to make a contribution to the literature on the human rights violations. Therefore, the research rather focuses on the village guards (and their families), a group on whom there less information available except for the crimes they have committed. It was believed that the outcomes of the field research and the interviews done with the village guards and their wives will provide valuable contributions to the lack of information on this group. There are no sources that analyze the village guard system through different perspectives based on the village guards' own experiences except than a few books, academic thesis and articles[9] and a small number of books[10] written by the village guards themselves. It is evident that in order to dissolve the village guard system permanently, the human rights, legitimacy and the social consensus perspectives that were overlooked during the establishment period should be taken into consideration. We believe that this paramilitary entity can only be truly abolished by abiding to these criteria. The success of such a process can be achieved by being well-informed on the village guards, who are both the actors and the victims of this system.

This research also includes four country case studies which we believe will be a guide for the abolition process of the village guard system. The chapter prepared by Osman Aytar aims to demonstrate the emergence of various paramilitary organizations in other countries that are similar to the village guard system in Turkey; their process of becoming a widespread practice, the social consequences of the system and the current situation of the relevant countries. For instance, even though the Guatemalan state and the armed dissidents signed the Peace Accords in 1996 and the paramilitary organizations were dissolved, certain groups belonging to these organizations started oppressing and persecuting the villagers again after a while and it is observed that the state overlooks these actions. This unfortunate situation will certainly guide us on what needs to be avoided during the dissolution process of the village guard system in Turkey.

Şemsa Özar

Notes

[1]For the establishment and the history of Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments, see. Osman Aytar (1991), Hamidiye Alaylarından Köy Koruculuğuna. (From Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments to Village Guard System) Istanbul: Medya Güneşi Publications.

[2]For an example from the 1930s Mardin see. Ali Enver Toksoy (1939). Milli Mücadelede Mardin. (Mardin During the National Struggle) C.H.P. Mardin Halkevi Publications No. 6. Istanbul: Resimli Ay Matbaası T.L. Şirketi, p.18.

[3]See: Village Law http://www.nvi.gov.tr/Files/File/Mevzuat/Nufus_Mevzuati/Kanun/pdf/KoYKANUNU.pdf The village guard system was implemented with an amendment made to the Article 74 of the Law: (Annex: 26/3/1985 - 3175/1 article.; Amendment: 27/5/2007 - 5673/1 article.) If there are serious indications of circumstances requiring state of emergency or acts of violence in villages or their surroundings, or if attacks on villagers' life and property increase for any reason, then temporary village guards may be employed in provinces to be determined by the Cabinet upon the proposal of the Governor and the approval of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The number of temporary village guards appointed in this manner shall not exceed 40,000 persons. The Cabinet has the authority to increase this amount up to by 50%. The employment of temporary village guards may be terminated in case of disappearance of the conditions that render the employment a requisite or in case of administrative obligations, provided that the same procedure is applied.

[4]See. Köy Koruculuğu Yönetmeliği (Regulations on Village Guard System), dated 01.07.2000 and numbered 24096 on the Official Gazette: http://www.seo.mavi1.org/mevzuat/20524.html

[5]These cities are, Diyarbakır, Hakkari, Şırnak, Tunceli, Batman, Bingöl, Bitlis, Mardin, Muş, Siirt, Van, Adıyaman, Ağrı, Ardahan, Elazığ, Gaziantep, Iğdır, Kahramanmaraş, Kars, Kilis, Malatya and Şanlıurfa.

[6]The response numbered B.05.0.İLİ.0.05.02.00.-610-1100 of the Ministry of Interior General Directorate for Provincial Administrations to the written parliamentary question numbered 7/16241 addressed to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.

[7]Ertan Beşe (2006), "Geçici Köy Korucuları" (Temporary Village Guards), Almanac Turkey 2005: Güvenlik Sektörü ve Demokratik Gözetim, (Security Sector and Democratic Oversight), TESEV Publications, p. 134-143. http://www.tesev.org.tr/Upload/Publication/c2e4e702-300a-4b46-b48e-ba55e802087b/Almanak-2005-Turkce-Tam%20Metin.pdf

[8]Upon a written parliamentary question, it is indicated in a report prepared by the Ministry of Interior General Directorate for Provincial Administrations addressed to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey that in Baykan district of Siirt, employment of 100 temporary village guards were started in November 2012 and 100 village guards were employed between December 2012 and January 2013. Similar news can be heard from other areas of Kurdistan. For instance, see. http://www.ozgurgundem.com/?haberID=80875&haberBaslik=Osmanl%C4%B1%E2%80%99dan%20yeni%20bir%20oyun&action=haber_detay&module=nuce , Özgür Gündem, 15.08.2013.

[9]Nur Tüysüz (2011), Yerel Güvenlik ve Etnik Kimlik: Güneydoğu Anadolu'da Bir Köy Üzerinden Köy Koruculuğu Sistemi (Local Security and Ethnical Identity: The Village Guard System Through A Village in Southeastern Anatolia) ,Unpublished Master Thesis, Yıldız Teknik University, Istanbul; Ali Rıza Özdemir (2012), PKK ve Korucular, (PKK and the Village Guards) Balıkesir: Altınpost Publications; Evren Balta Paker ve İsmet Akça (2013), "Askerler, köylüler ve paramiliter güçler: Türkiye'de köy koruculuğu sistemi" (Soldiers, villagers and paramilitary forces: The Village Guard System in Turkey), Toplum ve Bilim, Issue. 126, p. 7-34.

[10]Bedran Akdağ (2012), Dağın Ardındaki Gerçekler. PKK, Korucular, JİTEM, İtirafçılar ve "Diğerleri" (Reality beyond the Mountains. PKK, Village Guards, JITEM, Confessors and the "Others"), Istanbul: Ozan Publications.

II. HAMIDIYE CAVALRY REGIMENTS - A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW ON THE PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE / Osman AYTAR

1. Introduction

The establishment period of Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments and afterwards had a great importance for the Ottoman Empire. As is known, the nineteenth century witnessed many Kurdish revolts and rebellions against the Ottoman State. However, all of them were suppressed. The Ottoman State took advantage of the conflicts among the Kurdish people when suppressing these Kurdish movements. For instance, during the rebellion pioneered by Abdurrahman Pasha that arose in Sulaymaniyah region in 1806, the Ottoman forces used Halit Pasha, brother of Abdurrahman Pasha. Later, in 1840, Yezdanşêr, nephew of Bedirhan Bey who gained dominance in Botan (Cizre) region, was used against the latter. The Ottoman State collaborated with Iran in order to suppress the movement pioneered by Sheikh Obaidullah in 1880 which achieved great influence over the majority of Kurdistan (Arfa, 1966; Zeki, 1977; Nikitin, 1986; Gasaratyan v.d., 1987).

Apart from the Kurds, other nations living under the rule of the Ottoman Empire were also actively working on different fronts in order to gain their rights. The Ottoman identity was no longer as appealing to minorities as it was in previous periods. Armenians were also one of the leading people who increased their efforts to gain their rights. Certain Western countries that were in conflict with the Ottoman State started to take more and more advantage of the rightful demands of the Armenians living in today's Kurdistan region in order to serve their own benefits. Losing its territories gradually for centuries, the Ottoman State was using every means to hold the lands where Kurdish and Armenian people have been living. Abdülhamit's insistence on the Pan-Islamist politics was one of those means and methods (Aytar, 1992).

Hence, the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments became an agenda in 1890 as a part of such process and both the Armenian and the Kurdish national liberation were planned to be hindered by using these regiments. That is how the conflicts between the Kurdish people and the Armenians were used as a justification for this cause. The fact that the great nations aspired to be the guardians of the

Armenians and the continuous use of the propaganda that "Kurdistan would become Armenia" by the Ottoman State resulted in some Kurdish tribes to get armed and serve the purposes of the Ottoman State (Aytar, 1992).

Even though the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments were established approximately 120 years ago, their mission, reason for their foundation, practices and the consequences are still current in many ways. First of all, the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments were a tool for keeping a certain part of the Kurdish people under control as a part of the state's divide and rule policy; it was aimed to hinder the Kurdish opposition from getting stronger. Second, by using the "Kurdistan will become Armenia" propaganda and religious discourses, some of the Kurdish tribes were organized to stand by the side of the state against the Armenians and other Kurdish forces that may oppose the state. Third, despite the significant periodic differences, the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments contain important lessons for placing the Village Guard System in a historical framework, which was put into practice in 1985 as a part of divide and conquer policy. Fourth, the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments is one of the important elements of the historical research regarding the time period and region they were established.

The aim of this chapter is to analyze certain aspects of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments which was established in Kurdistan by the Ottoman Empire, and present a historical perspective for the past, present and future of the Village Guard System that was established in Kurdistan in 1985 by Turkey. While analyzing the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments, answers for these three research questions are sought: What is the mission, establishment and expanding process of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments? What are the main practices and the social impact of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments? What happened to the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments in the end?

Regarding the database, this chapter is essentially based on the sources that took place in my book entitled *Hamidiye Alaylarından Köy Koruculuğuna* (Aytar, 1992) which was published in 1992 by Medya Güneşi Publications. However, certain research published after that time are also included in this chapter. Apart from the aforementioned research questions, the aim of the research that this report is a part of, and the requests and suggestions of *Diyarbakır Institute for Political and Social Research* (DISA) who is conducting this research also provided a base for creating the criteria for including and excluding the sources. For this reason, the data gathering and evaluation methodology of this report can be defined as systematic compilation (Polit & Beck, 2010) followed by an analysis.

2. The mission, establishment and expanding process of the regiments

The first legislative regulation regarding the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments, whose founding started in 1890, was in 1891 with a law entitled "Hatt-ı Hümayun" (Imperial Edict). The reason for the establishment of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments is described in the first article of this law as follows:

> The formation of military order, the organization of which is necessary to guard the state against the attacks of foreign forces, is the responsibility of the country's general population as a whole. Since the exclusion of a portion of the population from this obligation may cause a deficiency, it is hereby the legitimate aim of the state to increase the power of the Ottoman forces by putting this law into effect. It is hereby decreed by the Caliphate that the formation of the Tribal Cavalry Regiments, who will be called by the honorable name of the "Hamidiye Soldiers", be undertaken. These regiments will consist of nomadic tribal people, who have been known for their generosity and who have not previously performed military service under a regular military order due to their special conditions. (Kodaman, 1987, p. 34).[1]

The mission and the reason for the establishment of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments, along with its formulation in the "Hatt-ı Hümayun" and the following legal regulations, became the main topic of discussion regarding the issue. In one of his statements regarding the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments, Sultan Abdülhamit stated that "It is imperative to strengthen the Turkish element in Roumelia and especially in Anatolia and above all, assimilate the Kurdish people that are among us and make them one of us."(Abdülhamit, 1984, p. 73) Abdülhamit replied to the criticisms that appeared in several European newspapers regarding the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments as:

> The European newspapers are harshly criticizing me for establishing the Kurdish regiments while claiming that the Kurdish people became more brutal towards the Armenians in eastern provinces since the establishment of this institution. They express their worries that these Kurdish people, whom we organized, will rebel against us in order to declare their independence. It is evident that these newspapers are looking for a topic, therefore they write anything whether it is true or not. The journalists comment on the situation in Kurdistan solely from the Armenians' point of view while sitting on their comfortable chairs in Beyoğlu. (Abdülhamit, 1984, p. 74-75).

Some of the Ottoman generals also had their objections to the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments. Abdülhamit expressed that this kind of objections were due to the fact that these generals were jealous of the 4th Army Commander M. Zeki Pasha and further continued on the benefits of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments:

> In case of a war against Russia, these well-disciplined and trained Kurdish regiments could serve us greatly. Moreover, the notion of 'obedience' which they will learn in the army, will be beneficial for them as well. The Kurdish chiefsmen will be pride themselves with their new position as officers and will show some effort to get into discipline. The Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments will therefore finalize their apprenticeship and will eventually become a precious army. I am aware that I am also criticized for bringing the children of certain Kurdish chiefsmen to Istanbul and employ them as civil servants. For years the Christian Armenians have been invading the ministry positions. What harm could there be in bringing the Kurdish people closer to us from now on with whom we belong to the same religion? Likewise, I am also criticized for safeguarding Bedirhanoğulları family and keep them at the center while claiming that these will also disturb the harmony of the society. Certainly, everybody is free to think as they please! However, I believe that I am in the right path considering the Kurdish policy I follow. Examining the situation on site, Zeki Pasha showed us the most convenient way by sharing his idea of forming regiments out of Kurdish horsemen. Since each issue we handle is criticized, in the end we got used to be criticized. (Abdülhamit, 1984, p. 75-76).

In the article entitled "Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments" printed on the 28th issue of Kurdistan newspaper on September 14, 1901 (September 1, 1317 in Julian calendar), it was emphasized that the Ottomans were concerned that Armenians could get Kurdish people on their side with their own national liberation opinions in order to fight against the tyranny and oppression increasing within the lands of the Ottoman Empire, and a possible alliance between these people would be a great peril. In order to sow discord between the Kurdish and Armenian people Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments were established and thus, for eradicating one ethnic group, the other group acquired privileges beyond rights and laws. (Bozarslan, 1991b). According to the news appearing on the 56-57th issue of Roja Nû (September 1945), Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments were established in order to cause disturbance between Kurdish people and their Christian neighbors (Jîna Nû, 1986). It was also stated that these regiments hindered the progress of the Kurdish people and created hostility between the Kurds and the Christians.

M. Emin Zeki (1977) states that the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments were formed in order to prevent the counter-regime movements that may arise among the Kurds, to further tighten their bonds to the state and consequently take advantage of the Kurdish people. According to Mikhail Semenovich Lazarev (1999), Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments were aimed to be used as a strong military barricade against Russia and as an offensive tool against Iran. Another important aim was to control the Kurdish "insurgencies", to make them get used to be under strict surveillance of the state administration and to eradicate without exception the independence of all the Kurdish tribes. In addition, it was also aimed that the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments will be used against the increasing liberation movement of the Christian national minorities, especially the Armenians. Celîlê Celîl (1985) states that the Hamidiye Cavalry Regimes, which are used just like a barricade against Russia, were also used against Armenian rebellion and uprising. Celîl further expressed that Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments played a crucial role in Sultan Abdülhamit's policy of oppressing, weakening and stupefying the Kurdish movement.

According to Hasan Arfa (1966), with the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments, Abdülhamit aimed to keep the aggressive Kurdish tribes under control, to make their combatant activities comply with the laws and to create a special bond between him and the Kurdish people. Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou (1965) states that the Ottoman State needed the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments for the war against Russia, however these regiments did not play a significant role in the war. Martin van Bruinessen (1978) expressed that the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments were established in order to subordinate Kurdish people to the Sultan and to pursue an active policy while changing the balances in the "East" in favor of the state. Bruinessen further emphasized that the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments were put into agenda as a precaution against Britain and Russia.

Yılmaz Öztuna (1983) argues that by means of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments the Kurdish people were used against the Armenians, therefore the Turkish military units were not weakened in a guerrilla war, and also the "never-ending demands" of the Kurdish people on getting armed against the Armenians were met. Bayram Kodaman (1987), enumerates the reason for the establishment of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments as; to maintain the central authority, establish a new socio-economical balance in the "Eastern Anatolia" in which the state will have more power, take advantage of the tribes as a military power,

hinder the actions of the Armenians and maintain a power balance between the Muslim groups and the Armenians, protect the "Eastern Anatolia" from the attacks of Russia and the British policies and carry on the Pan-Islamism policy.

Some sources (Ghassemlou, 1965; Erdost, 1987) also note that the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments were used against the Kurdish people living in Dersim, Southern Kurdistan and against Arab nationalism. They further note that these regiments fought by the side of the Ottoman soldiers against the Nestorians who revolted in 1915.

The establishment of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments as part of the divide and rule policy started in two regions. First region consisted of the lands close to the Russian border between Erzurum and Van, the second one was the northern parts of the lands between Mardin and Urfa. Following the order of Abdülhamit regarding the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments, the 4th Army Commander Marshal Mehmet Zeki Pasha based himself in Erzincan in the spring of 1891 and first sent Brigadier General Mahmut Pasha to Malazgirt and Hınıs region in order to start the establishment of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments. (Altay, 1970; Bruinessen, 1992; Aytar, 1992).

Even though the number of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments are generally close to each other, there are different statistics as well. According to Bruinessen (1978), the number of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments were 40 in 1892, 56 in 1893 and 63 in 1899. Based on the numbers provided in "Sâlname-i Askeri" (Military Yearbooks) dated 1311, Kodaman (1987) reports that at the beginning of 1895 the number of Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments were 56. In these yearbooks, the regiments were listed from 1 to 56 where the names and the ranks of the regiment commanders were noted. 51st, 52nd, 53rd, 54th and 55th regiments were under the control of the 5th Army in Syria due to their proximity, the remaining 51 regiments were under the control of the 4th Army based in Erzincan. 20 of the regiments under the control of the 4th Army were commanded by the colonels and the rest of them were commanded by the head of districts.

On the other hand, according to Şevket Beysanoğlu (1956, 1990), there were initially 36 regiments. This number rose to 56 in 1895 to 65 in 1908. Beysanoğlu further reports the location of the nine Light Cavalry Regiments in Diyarbakır region and the tribes they are associated with: 41st Regiment was in Viranşehir, associated with Milli tribe and was under the command of Ibrahim Bey[2]; 42nd Regiment was under the command of the Head of the District Abdül-

hamid (Humûd), son of Ibrahim Bey; 43rd Regiment was under the command of the Head of the District Mahmud, son of Ibrahim Bey; 44th Regiment was in Karakeçi district of Siverek, associated with Karakeçi tribe and was under the command of the Head of the District Halil Bey; 45th Regiment was in between Rasülayn and Mardin with Kiki/Kikan tribe and under the command of the Head of the District Reşit Bey; 46th Regiment was in Siverek, associated with Bucak tribe and under the command of Major Yusuf Ağa; 48th Regiment was in Cizre, associated with Miran tribe and under the command of the Head of the District Mustafa Pasha[3]. As Beysanoğlu informs, according to the last military yearbook of Abdülhamit's reign that was published in 1908, apart from the 41st, 42nd and 43rd regiments that were under the control of Milli tribe, there were also 63rd and 64th regiments in which Halil and Temur, sons of Ibrahim Pasha, were in command as the Head of the District. For the Russian officer Avyarov (1995), there were 65 regiments in 1899.

Regarding the number of cavalry and infantry units in each Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments, different numbers were given based on the period, location and size of the tribes (Avyarov, 1995; Lazarev, 1999; Süphandağ, 2006). These numbers vary between 300 and 800. Considering that the number of the regiments were 65 and approximately 500 military units (cavalries and infantries) were present in each regiment, it can be estimated that there were 32,500 military units which was a number not to be underestimated for the time.

Another important institution, which was founded in 1892, and coincides with the establishment of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments was the Tribal School. This school was important because the graduates of this school were placed in important state positions and especially in the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments. It was first opened in Akaretler, Istanbul but relocated to a new building in Kabataş in 1894. It can be argued that the school was a medium to impose Abdülhamit's Pan-Islamism, Ottomanism and centralization policies on the tribes through education. The school also had another function; to hold the children of the tribes' chiefsmen as "hostages", as a countermeasure against a possible uprising in Istanbul. (For further information regarding this school see: Celîl, 1985; Aytar, 1992; Akpınar, 1997).

3. Prominent practices and the social impact of the regiments

There are important lessons to be learned from the Sasun uprising and the period following this event, as it is one of the first examples for the practices of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments. As the Armenians fell into despair due to the conscious policy of Abdülhamit towards them, they started to resist actively in 1892. Their Sasun uprising in 1894 created a pretext for the massacres against the Armenians. The Ottoman State used several Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments to suppress the rebellion. Sasun and its vicinities were burned down. Tens of thousands of people were killed, 89 of the 102 village that had been raided were set on fire. In the following year, Armenian massacres were organized in Bitlis, Elazığ, Diyarbakır, Erzurum, Trabzon and Urfa. In 1896, the raiding of the Ottoman Bank by a group of Tashnak partisans was used as a pretext for another Armenian massacre that took place in Istanbul. Between 1894 and 1896, more than 300 thousand people were killed within the borders of the Ottoman State during the Armenian massacres and tens of thousands of them fled abroad. (Lazarev, 1999; Aydemir, 1972; Bruinessen, 1978; Yerasimos, 1980; Ahmad, 1986).

On the other hand, in order to misguide the Investigation Commission (formed by the representatives of foreign consulates), who held the Ottoman administration responsible for the Armenian massacre, the Ottoman administration forced some of the Armenians to state in front of the Commission that "They were treated well by the Turkish people". However, this attempt did not result in the desired outcome and all of these were not enough to clear the name of the Ottoman State. (Larsson, 1897).

The policy of setting people against each other seemed to cease as a result of the massive national and international reactions to the Sasun massacre, however it was put into practice again in September 1895. Numerous Armenian massacres took place in Akhisar, Trabzon, Bayburt, Bitlis, Erzincan, Palu, Diyarbakır and Erzurum in October 1895 and in Elazığ, Sıvas, Urfa, Malatya, Maraş, Antep, Arapkir, Siverek, Muş, Tokat, Amasya, Merzifon, Kayseri and other cities in November 1895. Oppression and massacres continued in Van in June 1896, in Istanbul in August 1896 and in Tokat in the spring of 1897. According to the official Ottoman statistics cited by the Swedish missionary E. J. Larsson (1897, 1919) regarding these massacres, 2,500 to 3,300 villages were burned down, 29 thousand 544 people were shot dead, 1,383 people were burned, 5 thousand 563 people died from hunger and cold and 92 thousand 650 people

became homeless between the years 1894 and 1897. The Swedish missionary Larsson believed that it was necessary to start a new crusade against Turkey and even though his evaluations were dominated by religious bias, the statistics he provided demonstrates the magnitude of the Armenian massacres which he defined as "blood bath".

As it can be seen, the massacres towards the Armenian people were not limited to the Kurdistan region. Some of the eye-witnesses stated that the government deliberately incited some Kurdish people to attack Armenians by stirring up Islamic fanaticism and encouraging them not to fear anything. In order to further deteriorate the Kurdish-Armenian relations, the Ottoman administration was meticulous in keeping the Kurdish people in the forefront. As a result, Ottoman soldiers, wearing Kurdish outfits, occasionally joined the massacres and resorted to oppression and extortion. In order not to let the disputes between the Kurdish tribes get in the way and hinder the massacre operations against the Armenians, the state itself took role in reconciling the tribes and the leading members of the Kurdish tribes and the other members in prisons were set free again for the same cause. Certainly these actions were valid for the members of the tribes who were already or willing collaborate with the state. (Lazarev, 1999).

Sasun massacre and the following incidents created a significant distrust between Kurdish and Armenian people. Properties, estates and especially the lands of the Armenians who fled abroad were seized by the Kurdish feudal lords. As Lazarev (1999) states, the Russian Ambassador İ. A. Zinoviyev informed that with the permission and condoning of the state administrators, The Kurdish people settled in some of the lands where Armenians abandoned, whereas the Kurdish feudal lords treated the remaining villagers, who had no support or protection from anyone, as slaves. The Ottoman administrators who could not collect taxes from the Armenian lands for several years charged the Kurdish feudal lords for these taxes and granted them the lands. Confiscating the abandoned lands was also a common practice.

The Ottoman administration did not punish the Kurdish people in the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments who committed a crime; on the contrary, they even encouraged them by rewarding. As Lazarev (1999) informs, making a complaint against the Kurdish people who were a member of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments in a way became a crime itself. It was widely accepted that no one belonging to the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments, in other words to a group carrying

the name of the Sultan, would have committed a crime, therefore the person who accused the perpetrator would be considered indirectly insulting the Sultan as well, which was considered as a crime. As Beysanoğlu (1956) informs, no action could be taken against the members of the Hamidiye Regiments without the permission of the 4th Army Commandment in Erzincan. For instance, if a member of the Hamidiye Regiment was involved in a criminal act, without the approval of the 4th Army Commandment, he could not be put on a trial or in these kinds of situations the verdict was given directly in Istanbul. Said Pasha (1977), who served as the grand vizier many times, expressed in his memoirs that by the will of the Sultan, the judicial organs of the region became redundant in prosecuting the members of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments and only the court-martials had jurisdiction over them.

The robbery and the raid of the members of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments not only affected the Armenians, but the Kurdish people who could not make into the regiments were subjected to as well. As Lazarev (1964) informs, the Kurdish people living in Hoşap village filed a complaint to the government against the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments, that during eight years, 12 people died and approximately 40 were wounded, 800 cattle and 10 thousand sheep were confiscated as a result of the raids done by the Hamidiye Regiments consisting of Şemsiler (Şemsiki) tribe. However, the government did not feel the necessity to take precautions. The reason behind this was to avoid offending the tribes who joined the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments that had an important role against the Armenians, but also the shares gathered from the pillage and plunders that were handed to the "exclusive" Ottoman elders, M. Zeki Pasha being in the first place, under the name of "offering" or "tax" were an important factor.

Lazarev (1999) cites a report prepared by a commission founded by the Germans for conducting an investigation regarding the construction of the Baghdad Railway. According to this report, the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments under the command of Ibrahim Pasha in Diyarbakır plundered hundreds of villages just in Ras-Al Ayn (Serê Kaniyê) region. Half of the population living in the villages located on Nusaybin road were forced to abandon their lands. The situation was worse at the east of Nusaybin guard post where Mustafa Pasha's mansions were located. On the road to Musul, along the two-day long road, only one of 20 villages was inhabited, with the rest of the villages in ruins. The economic condition of Diyarbakır province deteriorated. According to the report,

if the pillages continued in the same way, the whole province would perish. It was doubtful that an order from Istanbul could have prevented the robberies committed by the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments. In order to achieve this, the Ottoman administration had to take the most effective precautions and should have shown more effort. At the end of the report it is also emphasized that the situation in Musul province was not better either.

The Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments organized raids onto Halep and nearby Arab tribes as well. This was described in the reports prepared by the Russian and French Consulates located in Aleppo as cited by Lazarev (1999). The Ottomans took the side of the Kurdish people during disputes and clashes between several Arab tribes and the Kurdish tribes who were members of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments. Ibrahim Pasha burned down a village belonging to Abu Asaf tribe, killing the sheikh of the tribe and his relatives for filing a complaint against him to Istanbul. Hundreds of villages located in the south of Harran were destroyed as a result of similar actions.

Lazarev (1999) cited that the increasing influence of the Kurdish tribes belonging to the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments after the Armenian massacres started to agitate Abdülhamit as well. As a result, providing modern weapons to the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments were limited. The enhanced weapons were only provided in small numbers on the condition that they were preserved in the arsenals belonging to the Ottoman army. For instance, only one person out of hundred would acquire these weapons. Lazarev (1999) continued that the report dated February 1899 presented to Abdülhamit by the Cabinet, drew the attention to the situation of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments informing that the Regiments no longer had any discipline. A while after these incidents, the commission that was sent on a duty by Abdülhamit himself to investigate the report presented by the 4th Army Commander M. Zeki Pasha concluded their investigation on the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments with negative comments. The commission concluded that officers that had gone through a special military training should be positioned within these regiments and the processes should be regulated by an ordinance that was prepared by taking the regulations of the Cossack Regiments in Russia as an example. The Ottoman government did not put these suggestions into practice as they feared the reaction and rebellion of the leaders of the tribes.

The conflict between the civilian and military administrations and the Kurdish tribes was growing larger day by day. Lazarev (1999) informs that in a

letter sent by the Governor of Van to Babıâli[4] at the beginning of 1898, the Governor reported that he failed to find any means to come to an agreement with the Kurdish tribes since they refused to pay taxes and did not obey the government. In the response given to the Governor, it was suggested that the taxes should be collected by force. Following this order, three Kurdish prominent figures belonging to the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments were arrested; however, they were released after a short while.

The fact that in the participation of Kurds in the genocide attempts on the Armenians progressively diminished is another curious point. It is informed that among the Kurdish people living in Van and Bitlis vicinities, the general opinion was that the massacre against the Armenian people was becoming pointless and the relation between the Ottoman administration and the Kurds was "close to a degree of overt hostility". The news of a collaboration between some of the Kurdish tribes in the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments and the rebelling Armenians sometimes reached the Ottoman administrators as well. In the summer of 1903, several officers of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments were arrested on the grounds of aiding Armenian organizations. Between 1903 and 1904, just like it happened before in Sasun incidents, the Kurds started to show their support for the Armenians more, whether secretly or openly. Because of the Kurdish support to Armenians, the Ottoman administration could not exercise another Armenian slaughter at the magnitude of the one they realized a decade ago. (Lazarev, 1999; Gasaratyan vd., 1991; Celîl, 1985).

Maximov, the Russian Consul General of Erzurum of the period informed that (Lazarev, 1999) a Kurdish tribe fought against the Ottoman soldiers side by side with Sasun Armenians. The "Ararat" newspaper reported that there were Kurdish lords who saved the Armenians from the slaughter on the expense of their own lives. A Kurdish lord named Mahmutzade Beytullah Bey, for instance, opposed the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments and prevented whole Moks (Müküs) region to be burnt into ruins.

There are other regions where Kurdish people protected the Armenians as well. Yakup Ragıp Pasha of Besni, the leader of the Kurdish Rışvan tribe, protected the Armenians living in Malatya, Besni and Adıyaman during 1890s. He was even forced to kill 16 people from Kurdish Huveydi tribe in order to protect Armenians. There were Armenians who personally witnessed the event. (Dersimi, 1986).

The Kurdish-Armenian solidarity was visible in Kurdish and Armenian newspapers as well. Kurdish-Armenian fraternity covered significant space in the pages of Kurdistan newspaper. Mikdad Mithed Bedirhan and Abdurrahman Bedirhan, owners and editors-in-chief of the newspaper, were drawing the attention to the fraternity between Kurds and Armenians and the solidarity with the calls they made from time to time. Kurdistan newspaper was addressing to the Kurdish people who were agitated by the Sultan, who was provoking them to attack the Armenians, and was constantly reminding to learn lessons from the past experiences. (Bozarslan, 1991a, 1991b).

An article of Abdurrahman Bedirhan Bey, which was like a call addressed to the Kurdish people, was published in Turkish and in Kurdish in Troşak newspaper issue 4 in June 1901. According to Garo Sasuni (1986), this article, which carried the personal signature and the private seal of Abdurrahman Bedirhan, included harsh critics against Abdülhamit's administration and was urging Kurdish people not to serve him by giving examples.

Before 1908, several local uprisings and resistances with different agendas occurred in Kurdistan. According to an investigation done before 1908 the reason for these uprisings occurring in "Eastern Anatolia" were the burden of the taxes, newly-issued taxes, corruption of the local authorities and the pillaging and oppression acts of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regimes on the masses (Kars, 1984). According to another source (Petrosyan, 1974) the reason for the uprisings occurring in Kurdistan between the years 1906 and 1908 was the emergence of the foreign capitalists, who were benefitting from the capitulations and appeared before the merchant bourgeois, who seized the control of the regional trade after the Armenian massacres of 1894-1895, and the new taxes that were started to be collected from the peasants which created an uneasiness in various segments of the society.

Even after the Committee of Union and Progress seized the control, the state continued to manipulate and take advantage of the conflicts between the Kurdish tribes and their leaders. Having faith in the Party of Union and Progress who will solve the national problems with negotiations, some of the Kurdish leaders (Emin Ali Bedirhan, Seyit Abdülkadir, Şerif Pasha and others) supported the Second Constitution. The members of the Party of Union and Progress also needed support in the early days.

As is known, after the declaration of the Second Constitution, several Kurdish associations were founded and newspapers published. In April 1909,

the Committee of Union and Progress and the Kurdish leaders fell out on the pretext that the Kurdish leaders were in collaboration with the rebels who seized the power for a short period of time. The real reason was the fact that the Party of Union and Progress wished to increase the national oppression instead of taking democratic steps in solving national problems. This period also witnessed the blossoming of relations between the Kurdish people and the Armenians. The state sent spies to Kurdistan in order to spoil the relations between the Kurds and the Armenians. On the other hand, disputes among some Kurdish leaders also intensified, especially the conflict between Seyit Abdülkadir and Emin Ali Bedirhan. The rivals accused each other of being "separatists" and "Russian partisans". Taking advantage of the situation, just before 1911, the Ottoman administration shut down the Kurdish political and educational institutions and arrested the managers. Among the institutions shut down were the Kurdish Solidarity and Progress newspaper and the Kurdish school. Some of the Kurdish leaders who managed to avoid the crackdown of the administration fled abroad and some of them continued their activities clandestinely. The Kurdish intellectuals were already punished in the past on the pretext of the 31 March incidents. (Gasaratyan vd., 1991). Between the years 1908 and 1913, after the declaration of Second Constitutional Era, several journals and newspapers such as "Şark ve Kürdistan" (*Orient and Kurdistan*), "Kürd Teavün ve Terakki Gazetesi" (*Kurdish Solidarity and Progress Newspaper*), "Kürdistan", "Rojî Kurd" "Yekbûn" (*Unity*) ve "Hetawî Kurd"(*Light of the Kurds*) were printed in Istanbul (Malmîsanij & Lewendi, 1989).

Some of the Kurdish groups enjoying the privileges during the Abdülhamit period greeted the administration of the Committee of Union and Progress with doubt and apprehension. These groups led the protests against the government in some regions of Kurdistan. Dersim Kurds, who never benefited from privileges and were always a "nuisance" to the Ottoman State regarded the new regime as "consolidation of the Turkish hegemony on the Kurds" and revolted. Even though a pact was made between the administration and the Dersim Kurds, this did not last long. The Hemawends of the Kurdish tribes revolted in Southern Kurdistan in October 1908. Zibari and Barzani tribes supported the Hemawends (Gasaratyan vd., 1991).

4. Dissolution period and the end of the regiments

One of the first "breaking points" in the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments occurred after the Sasun incidents. According to Lazarev (1999), between the years 1905 and 1908, dissolution within the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments advanced and resistance against the state progressed. During the last years of Abdülhamit's reign, some consequences important for both the government and the Hamidiye Regiments started to surface. The majority of the Kurdish people in the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments were avoiding the orders given by the state. During that period, the number of the members in each of the 64 Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments reduced to 459. This number further reduced to 373 in the fall of 1907. In reality, soldiers and officers in the regiments were only half of this number. The deployment of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments by the Ottoman government to suppress the rebellions in Yemen, where the army suffered great casualties, accelerated the uneasiness and the dissolution within the Hamidiye Regiments. For instance, the 40th Hamidiye Regiment was almost completely annihilated in Yemen. The Kurdish members of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments did not want to spill blood under the command of the Ottoman officers and for a cause that is alien to them.

After the declaration of the Second Constitution, the position of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments started to be heavily discussed again. Both within the Union and Progress and the press attacks against the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments took place. According to Lazarev (1999), the public was especially showing massive reactions to M. Zeki Pasha, the organizer of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments and the actor of the Armenian massacres. The government was also displeased with Zeki Pasha for his failure in dealing Kurds in Dersim, where rebellions and uprisings against the government were ever present. Although Zeki Pasha was called from Kurdistan and put on a trial, his case was never ruled.

The order that the Ottoman government issued in September 1908 for disarming the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments was not fulfilled as the local authorities could not risk having a fight with the powerful Kurdish lords; moreover, they were not reluctant to carry out this order. At the same time, the government issued a memorandum that was sent to the provinces, urging everyone to treat the Kurds who did not wish to follow the order with extreme caution. At a session in the Ottoman Assembly at the end of 1908, contrary to certain groups'

expectations, a decision regarding the dissolution of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments was not taken. The Kurdish lords in the Hamidiye Regiments interpreted the campaign against the regiments as an attack on their rights. As a result, tension between the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments and the regular army units escalated in the spring of 1908. The Kurdish tribe members of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments objected to the attempts to incorporate some of the regiments into the army. This resistance against the efforts to reorganize the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments was pioneered by Hüseyin Pasha[5], the leader of the Hayderan tribe (Lazarev, 1999).

In the spring of 1909, a partial disarming of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments started. The lords and the landlords were asked to fully abide the rules of procuring horse, manpower, equipment, etc. Some of the Kurdish tribes were disarmed and Hüseyin Pasha and many other Kurdish leaders were arrested. The fact that the Party of Union and Progress both feared a mass Kurdish rebellion and did not fully give up the idea of benefiting from the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments in case of a war with Russia led their attempts to completely dissolve the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments to be futile. (Lazarev, 1999).

After the recurrent discussions regarding the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments, the government found it more suitable to reorganize the Regiments rather than completely dissolving them. As a consequence, two commissions were formed. Under the command of Major Hacı Hamdi Bey of Trabzon, the first commission was assigned to reorganize the northern groups near the borders whereas the second commission was assigned to the desert regiments under the command of Fahrettin Altay.

In the winter of 1911, the commission under the command of Altay finished its task of reorganizing the tribes and the families living in Cizre, Nusaybin, Mardin, Viranşehir, Harran and Suruç and returned back to the military center in Erzincan. Shortly after, Altay was tasked with organizing a ceremony of delivering the flag, the imperial decree as well as the officer's certificates on behalf of the Sultan to the Tribal Cavalry Regiments. Altay went to Erzurum from Trabzon and while attending the ceremonies in locations such as Hınıs, Varto, Eleşkirt, Karaköse, Tutak, Erciş, Cizre, Nusaybin, Mardin and Viranşehir, the Balkan Wars broke out. (Altay, 1970). Although some sources (e.g Fırat, 1983) inform that the Tribal Cavalry Regiments did not join the Balkan Wars, despite the general reluctance among the Kurdish people, several Tribal Regiments joined the

Balkan Wars. (Schwerin, 1913; Altay, 1970; Bruinessen, 1978; Avcıoğlu, 1983; Yaşin, 1983; Dersimi, 1986; Kodaman, 1987)

It can be said that the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments essentially lost their importance after the declaration of the Second Constitutional Era. Especially Hayderanlı Hüseyin Pasha, one of the commanders of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments, struck a powerful blow onto the regiments. As soon as he got out of the prison, he migrated to Iran with some of the members of the Hayderan tribe. The Ottoman administration confiscated Hayderan's land and sold it to private individuals. After this incident, according to a Russian observer, the Kurdish cavalries, for all practical purposes, died out (Lazarev, 1999).

When the First World War broke out, The Ottoman administration searched for ways to best benefit from the Kurdish tribes, especially the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments. The reason for this was the fact that one of the ways to secure the back of the front while fighting against Russia in Caucasia and Britain and France in the south was to earn the support of the Kurds. For this reason, the Turkish-Kurdish relations that gradually deteriorated in the previous years had to be reconstructed and sustained on a "solid" ground and sustained. In this period, rumors on the possible massacres of the Kurds that will be done by the Armenians together with the Russians were deliberately spread. (Arfa, 1966).

It was clearly observed in the following periods that the Ottoman administration was only partially successful in mobilizing the Kurdish to be on their side. The increasing awareness among the Kurdish people against the Ottoman policy of turning the people against each other, the Kurdish national awakening and the annihilation policies that are directed towards Kurds after the Armenian genocide in 1915 greatly prevented Kurds from taking place in any action that protected the interest of the Ottoman state. Nevertheless, the percentage of the Kurdish people joining the wars on the side of the Ottoman state cannot be underestimated. According to Arfa (1966), 4 divisions and 1 reserve brigade, a total of 30 regiments consisted of Kurdish tribes joined the war.

On the other hand, some of the Kurdish units that started fighting by the side of the Ottomans changed sides and joined Russians in the early stages of the war. According to Lazarev (1999), in the first few weeks of the war, several influential Kurdish tribal lords and the commanders of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments, together with the 4 thousand cavalries under their command joined

the Russian side. During the Bayazid (today's Doğubeyazıt) clashes, the Kurdish units were surrendering themselves to the Russians without showing any resistance. 5 commanders of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments declared that they were ready to side with Russia as soon as the Russians arrived in the vicinities of the Lake Van. Upon making similar statement, Hüseyin Pasha was arrested by the Ottomans and sent to court-martial on the charge of treason. Yusuf Kamil Bedirhan, uncle of Abdürrezzak Bedirhan made a call to Kurdish soldiers, urging them to point their weapons at the Ottoman army and to join the Russians. Despite all these efforts, there are numerous sources informing that the Kurdish tribal units took part in important battles at the Russian front. According to these sources, in 1915, Colonel Halit Bey[6], the tribal leader of Cibran, was trapped inside an encirclement of Cossacks at Zoru River in the vicinity of Hınıs together with a tribal regiment under his command. Even though the Russian Cossacks were superior in number, the tribal regiment was nevertheless successful in breaking the circle. This incident resulted in perishing of half of the regiment, and twice as many casualties as on the Cossack side. Halit Bey himself killed the Russian commander (Arfa, 1966; Silopi, 1969; Bruinessen, 1978; Avcıoğlu, 1983; Gasaratyan vd., 1991).

Even though the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments were abolished, units consisting of the members of the Kurdish tribes joined the "Turkish War of Independence". Kazım Karabekir Pasha aimed to use the Kurdish tribal units in "soothing" both the people living beyond Caucasia and the Kurds themselves (Bruinessen, 1978; Avcıoğlu, 1983; Gasaratyan vd., 1991; Beysanoğlu, 1990). Kurdish tribal units were used during the first years of the Republic of Turkey as well. As Mete Tuncay (1981) informs, in an article entitled "National Security Organization in the Republic of Turkey" which was published in 1928 in Türk Yılı, it is stated that "each regular army cavalry division consists of 3 to 4 cavalry regiments and one cavalry artillery battalion, each tribal division consists of 4 cavalry regiments". It is also known that the tribal militia collaborating with the state were used in suppressing the Kurdish rebellions and uprisings that occurred in a later time. (Bulut, 1991).

5. Discussion and some remarks

The aim of this chapter was to examine some aspects of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments that were established in Kurdistan by the Ottoman Empire

and provide a historical perspective for the past, present and future of the Village Guard System which was implemented by Turkey in 1985.

The information presented above in general regarding the mission, establishment and expanding periods, practices and the social effects as well as the dissolution period and the end of the Regiments proves that the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments, apart from its importance as a historical consciousness, is full of important historical and organizational lessons that needs to be taken for the Village guard system. Undoubtedly, there are significant periodic and structural differences between these two institutions. However, despite these differences, both organizations are a part of the sovereign state's aim to sustain its own hegemony and its divide and rule policy.

Considering the circumstances that gave birth to the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments and the tasks they were used for, the main aim was to turn Kurdish people both against each other and Armenians. Another important deduction is the fact that the regiments were used during the wars against other states. When this deduction is compared with the village guard system, it could be said that the main purpose of establishment of the village guard system was to "use the Kurd against the Kurd. (Aytar, 1992)

After the brutal suppression of uprisings and rebellions, beginning in early 1800's, a perception of "lack of state power" emerged in the public in Kurdistan. It can be argued the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments were used as a tool to reinstate the authority of state authority. In the same manner, the village guard system could also be interpreted as a tool to fill the "lack of state power" that would be caused by the guerrilla movement started by the PKK in 1984.

Another important point that can be inferred regarding the brief information provided above is regarding the Armenian massacres that took place between the years 1894 and 1896. The massacres were generally carried out by some Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments led by influential tribe leaders, under the control of the Ottoman soldiers. The majority of the Kurdish tribes not belonging to the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments kept their distance from the massacres; moreover, several tribes even supported Armenians in order to prevent the Ottoman administration getting stronger in Kurdistan. Just like the case in Dersim, Kurdish people fought together with the Armenians against the Ottomans in some regions. For instance in Dersim, Kurds saved 5 thousand Armenians from falling into the hands of the Ottoman soldiers. (Lazarev, 1999; Ahmad,

1986). The control that military and police forces have on the village guards, using village guards in military operations, and "intertwining" relations between certain leaders of the village guards, soldiers, police and other state officers that were covered by the media numerous times also show important similarities between the village guard system and the Hamidiye Regiments despite the periodic differences.

During the time when the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments developed and gained strength, the Kurdish nationalism also developed. The Bedirhan family members played an important role in this as well. Some of the members of the Bedirhan family participated in the activities against the government in mid 1890s. Some members of the Bedirhan family were arrested and exiled in September 1898 on the grounds that they were preparing for a general Kurdish uprising and the marching of the Kurds to the capital city. During that period, the Kurdistan newspaper in Cairo also published anti-Abdülhamit propaganda. The Kurdish intellectuals who were forced to flee abroad deepened their relations both with the Armenians and the Young Turks. Pioneering these efforts, Abdurrahman Bedirhan joined the First Congress of the Young Turks as the Kurdish delegate (Celîl, 1985; Malmîsanij, 1986; Gasaratyan vd., 1991; Kutlay, 1990; Bozarslan, 1991a, 1991b).

Another important observation regarding the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments is that the attitude of the state changed when they no longer needed the regiments or when the administration changed. Once exalting their "heroic deeds" and providing all kinds of financial and spiritual possibilities to the regiment commanders like Îbrahîm Paşayê Milî (Milli İbrahim Pasha), Kor Husên Pasha (Hüseyin Pasha) and Xalid Begê Cibirî (Cıbranlı Halit Pasha), their sad ends costing them their lives prove that the privileges brought by taking part in the institutions that are the tools for the divide and rule policy of the states are not everlasting. They are the concrete examples for what might happen when these institutions are no longer needed or when similar institutions consisting of other groups were wished to be established. Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments is an important lesson for the past, present and the future of the Village Guard System in this respect as well.

Notes

[1]The original version [in Ottoman language] of the first article of the "Hatt-ı Hümayun" regarding the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments as follows: 'Memleketin, teaddiyât ve tecavüzat-ı ecânibten muhafazası zımnında tertibi muktezi olan heyet-i askeriyenin terkibi ol memleket ahâlisinin nüfus-i umumiyesine ait mükellefiyet cümlesinden olup, bu mükellefiyetten ahâliden bir kısmının istisnâsı kuvve-i umumiyenin noksanını icap edeceği derkâr bulunduğuna ve bu kaide-i meşrianın Memâlik-i Mahruse-i Şâhâne'de bihakkın mer'i tutulmasıyla kuvve-i umumiye-i Osmaniyenin tezyid ve teksir olunması maksad-ı meşriasına binâen hususiyet-i halleri hasebiyle şimdiye kadar tamamiyle intizâm-ı askeri altında olarak hizmet-i askeriyede bulunamayan ve cudilik ile meşhur ve me'luf oldukları halde haymenişin olan efrâd- aşâirden müceddeten "Asakir-i Hamidiye" namı celiliyle Süvâri Aşâir Alayları teşkili muktezâyı irâde-i seniyye-i hilâfet-penâhidir' (Kodaman, 1987, p. 34).

[2]An eminent commander of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments of the period, Milli İbrahim Pasha (İbrahîm Paşayê Milî), confronted new regime after the declaration of the Second Constitutional Era and seized the control of a region located in today's Syria. Due to heavy attacks of the Ottoman units who were in collaboration with Arab tribe Şemmer, he was forced to retreat to the Sinjar Mountains located within the borders of today's Southern Kurdistan and killed. Some sources claim that Ibrahim Pasha was executed. For more detailed information on the subject, see sources such as Aytar (1992) and Kıran (2003).

[3]For more information on Miranlı Mustafa Pasha (Misto Paşayê Mîran), another eminent commander of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments, see sources such as Yaşın (1983) and Aytar (1992).

[4]Babıâli is a metonym for the central government of the Ottoman Empire located in Istanbul. TN

[5]Hayderanlı Hüseyin Pasha (Kor Husên Paşa), one of the famous commanders of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments, was subjected to prison and exile after the declaration of the Second Constitutional Era. Following the Kurdish Rebellion in 1925, he fled Aydın (his city of exile) and went to Syria where he contacted Xoybûn (Hoybun) who organized the Ağrı Rebellion. In 1929, while Hüseyin Pasha was on his way to join Ağrı Rebellion, he was killed by Medeni, son of Hacı Musa Bey, with the collaboration of the Turkish administration of the period. For detailed information on Hüseyin Pasha and his period see sources such as: Aytar (1992) and Süphandağ (2006).

[6]One of the graduates of the Tribal School and the commander of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments, Cıbranlı Halit Pasha (Xalid Begê Cibirî) was the brother-in-law of Sheikh Said, the leader of the 1925 Kurdish Rebellion, and the first president of the Azadi Cemiyeti (Freedom Society) who organized the rebellion. He was arrested in Erzurum in 1924, and executed by a firing squad together with a group of Kurdish people including Yusuf Ziya Bey in 1925. For more information on Xalid Begê Cibirî and the 1925 Kurdish Rebellion see. Hasretyan, Ahmad ve Ciwan (1985), Arda (1988a, 1988b) and Olson (1989).

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III. ESTABLISHMENT, CONSTRUCTION AND PRESERVATION OF THE VILLAGE GUARD SYSTEM IN THE MEETING MINUTES OF THE TURKISH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND IN THE TURKISH PRESS / Nesrin UÇARLAR

1. Discussions taking place at the Grand National Assembly of Turkey regarding the village guard system: October 1984-February 2011

This chapter presents an overview of the discussions pertaining to the village guard system at the Grand National Assembly of Turkey through an analysis of meeting minutes. It offers excerpts from relevant sections of these minutes. First period (1984-1988) is the establishment of the village guard system and includes proposals and objections to this system. Second period (1988-1991) is the broadening of the village guard system and focuses on the problems arising from the system and the proposed "solutions". Third period (1991-1996) is about when the system is consolidated and is analyzed on the grounds of the unchanging methods and approaches to the subject despite the establishment of new governments. Fourth period (1996-2002) focuses on the precautions and the way the term "reform" is used after the guard system became a critical problem. Fifth period (2002-2009) is when the "reform" is interpreted as a "pacta sunt servanda"[1] and analyzes the policies that aim to improve the conditions of the guards. Sixth period (2009-2012), is the last turning point regarding the village guard system and is examined under the light of certain facts such as "Bilge Village Massacre" and "Hançer Timi" ("Dagger Team"), and the discussions arising from these facts. Evaluation section includes an analysis of various political parties' policies during all these periods, and the influence of these policies on their approach to Kurdish issue and democracy are critically discussed.

a. Village Guard System again after sixty years: Implementation of the system, proposals and objections (1984-1988)

> *As a consequence of this system, if some people and tribes take up arms, our people will lacerate each other in the following period, and due to social wounds, trusting and peaceful environment will be completely destroyed and a strictregime will be permanent in the region.*
> Fuat Atalay, Social Democratic Populist Party (SHP) MP

On October 17, 1984, the Prime Minister Turgut Özal took the floor at the National Assembly and briefed on military operation in the region following the first armed action of PKK that took place in Siirt and Hakkari on August 15, 1984. He also stated that the formation of village guards and arming them are being considered. Subsequently, in the session of March 12, 1985, a clause was added to the Article 74 of the Village Law and implementation of village guard system was discussed:

> If thieves and bandits should emerge during harvest time, then the village headman and the council of elders should make a list of adequate potential guards among the villagers who can use weapons and hand it to the head of the district. If the head of the district allows, then these voluntary guards will protect the village and the villagers together with the main guards from pillagers and bandits.
> If there are serious indications of circumstances requiring state of emergency or acts of violence in villages or their surrounding, or if attacks on villagers' life and property increases for any reason, then "Temporary Village Guards" may be employed in provinces to be determined by the Cabinet, upon the proposal of the Governor and the approval of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The salaries of the temporary village guards that are appointed in this respect are to be paid for the duration of their duties and compensations will be given to them upon the end of duty. The amount is determined by the Cabinet upon the demand of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the related expenses of the budget of the Ministry of Finance and Customs are to be transferred to the budget of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which then makes the necessary payments. Salaries and compensations that will be paid to the village guards are exempted from all kinds of taxes and fees.

During the discussions, M. Seyfi Oktay speaking on behalf of the People's Party (HP)[2] stated that this clause aims "to install a new state of emergency for

the Turkish peasant into our legal legislation" and further expressed:

> "... our State is in possession of main security agencies... We cannot understand the necessity and the reason to establish a village guard system with extraordinary power while the State has the authority to use these main security agencies where required."

Ömer Kuşhan, another member of the Populist Party, expressed that they understand and accept this necessity but have some reservations:

> "What about the social security rights of these people and if in the future these people are appointed with bad intentions...since there is not a regulation regarding this, which criteria will they be checked against?"

Cüneyt Canver, another MP of People's Party, also draws attention to this misconduct:

> "Considering Kahramanmaraş incidents, imagine that an officer will provide arms to some of the people in order to kill the other ones...What kind of measures are proposed to be taken against these kinds of misuses?"

During the session of March 26, 1985, Mustafa Çorapçıoğlu, MP of Nationalist Democracy Party (MDP) takes the floor and reminds that the Plan and Budget Committee does not accept the clause that was proposed to be added. This clause stated that: "It may not be possible to find suitable village guards among local people all the time, and most important of all, they may abuse their power due to reasons such as feud, rangeland problems, etc."

At the same session, the government, without taking into consideration any of the objections regarding the village guard system, while tacitly accepting the inadequacy of law enforcement officers, launched the system by adding the following sentence to the Article 74:

> "Upon physical injury, disablement or death during term of duty of village guards and temporary village guards, Law numbered 2330 on Compensation in Cash and Pension shall apply."

While reminding the example of Kahramanmaraş incidents, first objections to the village guard system focused on the problems that may arise as a result of arming a part of the people against the other half and providing extraordinary power to them which is open to abuse. As a matter of fact, six

months after the implementation of the guard system, examples of abusive actions were started to be heard. On September 2, 1986, M. Seyfi Oktay, MP of SHP, took the floor during the session regarding the military operation of the Turkish Armed Forces on the borders of Iraqi State in August. While reporting his party's investigations done in the region, he stated that "the people are caught between the pincers of the oppression of bandits on the one hand, and the discriminatory attitude of the state officers on the other" and expressed that the village guards are another source of uneasiness in the region:

> "The village guards that are backed up by the power of the state use this power for personal disputes between their tribes and the others. In addition to that, partisanship became one of the sources of uneasiness."

During the session of September 4, 1986, Yıldırım Akbulut, Minister of Internal Affairs, took on floor in order to defend the village guard system. He stated that they have implemented this system in 13 cities, appointed 7993 village guards until that day, distributed 3679 long-barreled weapons and added that "the act of aggression and the propaganda actions of the separatist terrorists were significantly decreased" in the villages where temporary village guards were stationed.

On the session of March 4, 1987, Zeki Yavuztürk, Minister of National Defence, briefed the incidents that took place on February 22nd, 1987 as a reason for the cross-border military operation that restarted in the region:

> "...a group of 25-30 people separatist bandits wearing military uniforms came to Taşdelen Village of the Uludere District, Hakkâri and demanded that all the village guards to be gathered; upon the refusal of their demands, they attacked the houses of village guards with automatic weapon and bombs while shooting randomly, and as you are aware, they killed 14 people, mainly children and women, and wounded 9 people among villagers."

Shortly after similar incidents had taken place, during the session of March 11, 1987, DYP deputy Murat Sökmenoğlu stated that arming the village guards did not bring a solution, on the contrary increased the "murders", whereas Erdal İnönü of SHP expressed that despite that martial laws were in practice for six years and three cross-border operations took place the attacks still continued, and the village guards could not defend themselves in a guerrilla war. İnönü also

added that some village guards played roles in the personal disputes between the tribes and even had a negative effect on the persistence of the blood feuds. In the session of December 28, 1987, this time İnönü stated that arming people on the grounds of Gun-Carrying Law in state of emergency region[3] is a bad attempt that may result in unpredictable perils. He also added that village guard system is no longer depending on the will, the villagers who do not want to become a village guard are subject to every kind of pressure and they were forced to an emigration.

In the session of January 14, 1988 Fuat Atalay of SHP drew the attention on "forced village guard" regulation and shared his observations on the investigation done in his constituency, Diyarbakır:

> "... I learnt and received written statements from the citizens on this issue that... some of the law enforcers arbitrarily conducts strict searches in villages and during these human rights are violated. Clear statements of the relevant authorities is getting wide-spread which informs that these searches will get more frequent as long as the citizens do not accept village guard system... After the forcing of the village guard system, now the citizens are forced to become informers under physical torture... Lastly... I would like to underline that providing license to the residents of the state of emergency region without considering the type of the gun creates serious problems... After this regulation, gun traders and smugglers gained an important role in the region and grew stronger... After this regulation, if, some people and tribes get armed, in the following period our people will hurt each other and due to social scars, the trustful and peaceful environment will be completely destroyed and the strict regimes will be permanent in the region."

b. Broadening of the village guard system: Problems and "solution" proposals (1988-1991)

> *It is both irrational and unreal to claim that some people are forced to become village guards considering the fact that citizens are actually lining up for being temporary village guards.*
> Abdülkadir Aksu, Minister of Internal Affairs

As can be seen, all of the problems that were discussed and happened during the 30 years while the system was in practice, became visible and were

put on the record of the National Assembly only almost 2 years after the implementation of the guard system. Providing arms and special power to the guards without considering their qualification demonstrated that they are inadequate in fighting a guerrilla war and a danger both to themselves and the society they are living in. It is also observed that the coercion of the state as well as the organization against themselves and the people living in the villages increased. The village guards became another element of oppression; moreover they were used by the state against the people living in the region.

In the session of March 9, 1988, Hasan Fehmi Güneş, MP of SHP, pointed out that the problems arising from the guard system are due to the fact that the government is misidentifying the problem:

> "Now, when we are talking about "banditry", by all means preventing banditry comes to our minds. There was a Banning Banditry Law during the first years of the Republic and the village guards existed in that law. Certainly, the state's armed forces was not like this back then, its resources were not like this, it did not have sufficient resource to protect all the villages...If we are saying that we will solve the problem with the Banning Banditry Law mechanisms, then I am afraid we are wrong. According to the official statistics, today there are 12 thousand village guards... How big is the organization you are facing? According to the official statistics that were announced a while ago, it is much less than this number... the village guards will not provide any advantage in terms of security, especially considering the ideological and political structure of the region... Moreover, as far as we observed, the village guards did not solve the problem, on the contrary they caused problems in the region. Why? As you know, there is a feudal system in the region; there is a tribal system and a tribal balance... Therefore, if you unbalance this by providing arms and ammunition to one side, you will be facing different problems; you have faced different problems indeed, this should not have happened... This can be said: "Well, the village guard system in that region is a matter of employment at the same time"... but, if we are really going to do this, if we really believe that this will contribute to the economy, then let's do it by the economic methods; not by wrong mechanisms such as providing arms, ammunition, gun license. What could be done? Investments could be done, workplaces could be established and job opportunities could be opened with this money. These are needed and this is what needs to be done... The state organs should exercise the duties of the village guard; no other power within the Turkish society could or should take the responsibility to maintain security by proxy."

It is a consistent attitude of the government to establish the village guard system as the solution since it identifies the armed struggle dimension of the Kurdish movement as a problem of banditry. On the other hand, approaching the issues of 1980s or even 2010s -considering that the village guard system is still in practice- with the solutions of 1920s can be interpreted as accepting the fact that there was no attempt to contribute to the economic and social –let alone political- development of the region for the last 60-90 years. It also means that the political parties in the parliament and the state were benefiting from the tribal system with a clientalist approach and were pursuing a deliberate policy of deepening the existing gaps within the Kurdish society by rendering these tribes an actor in the armed struggle as well. Especially, considering that the number of members of the armed organization is less than village guards and the expenses spent for the village guard system is close to possible economic investments; in other words the fact that the guard system has no meaningful benefit in terms of economic or military gain verifies both of the assumptions. Furthermore, the only meaningful aspect of the village guard system from the point of the state is that instead of weakening the authority and duty of the state that owns the monopoly on violence, it confers a part of the society- specially the part sharing the common demographic and sociological grounds with the organization that it is fighting against- with this authority and duty. The fact that the state's technically more advanced military force and structure was insufficient against the organization's guerrilla tactics and regional domination paved the way for the implementation of the village guard system.

On March 24, 1988 Zeki Çeliker, MP of DYP, took on the floor on the amendments done in act of fees and reminded that:

> "...a while ago, at the state of emergency region in Eastern and Southeastern part of the country, citizens who were not appointed as 'village guards' were also provided with 1 –or 2 if they were able to obtain- guns in order to arm them as well."

Furthermore, he also reminded that in contrast to the village guards that got 90 thousand liras income, there is no point in;

> "...putting a person under a heavy tax burden in a way to entrap him

> who barely obtained a gun with his own earning or by selling her wife's jewellery or his field in order to defend and protect themselves under hard conditions, and who claimed himself as an honorary officer for protecting the honor of the state"

He also added that there is no justice in this and requested that some of the fees required for getting a license are reduced to a more "fair price". Çeliker's concern regarding the economic inequality between the official guards that are armed by the state itself and the citizens who obtain a gun by "themselves" cannot even be interpreted that the state -that enables the citizens to get armed "by their own means" while collecting the fees- is ignoring the arms trade taking place in the region. As a matter of fact, in the session of April 13, 1988, Mehmet Adnan Ekmen, MP of SHP expressed that the problems arising from the village guard system have reached to a terrible extent in which the state is in collaboration with outlaws and added that:

> "Individuals who are sentenced to 10 or 20 years of imprisonment are making contacts with state authorities, joining the operations in state helicopters, with a gun on their shoulders."

In order to respond to these allegations, MP of the Motherland Party (ANAP) Mehmet Kahraman took the floor and expressed that "these unfair criticisms against the regulations that are reasonable and on citizen's side are unfortunate statements" and further stated that it is not possible to comprehend "...the understanding which begrudges a weapon given for protecting their life and their country to the sons of this nation who already put their lives on the line." He also added that the crimes committed by the weapons of the village guards have not reached to a dimension that is "significant enough to be considered". Thus, the ancient understanding of the Republic of Turkey that is; "when the homeland is in question, everything else is trivial" was exposed.

In fact, in the session of June 13, 1989, Hasan Çakır, MP of ANAP not only defended the village guard system by saying that this system is not a state of emergency regulation and has been in practice since the foundation of the republic and even existed during the Ottoman Empire, but he also emphasized the similarities between the discourses of the ones criticizing this practice and that of the terrorists:

> "In the regions where state of emergency have been declared, [the government] established adequate village guard system and provided them guns belonging to the state and has achieved success with this system. It was so successful that in the international correspondences and the declarations distributed by these traitors, this issue is constantly exploited and complained about...Moreover, in order to emphasize the importance of the issue, I would like to give a couple of examples from the speeches of certain members of the parliament done in the region due to local administration elections regarding the village guard system: A speech done by a member of the parliament in Nusaybin on March 22, 1989: 'They gave weapons to us and say; take them and kill each other. They established an institution called village guard system. By this institution they want us to lacerate each other; by this institution, they laid an economic ambush for the village guards, for our people, for my people whom they left to starve.'...From another speech in another place: 'I am calling out to the village guards: You are holding these weapons in your hands for you to kill each other. Go and hand over those weapons...'"

In the session of October 4, 1989, Fuat Atalay of SHP gave examples regarding the unsolved murders in which many village guards were involved and stated that the village guard system is literally dividing people into two groups and the ones accepting and defending the system are defined as pro-statists whereas the ones not accepting it are labeled as being against the state. In order to respond to this commentary, while referring to the members of the organization, Çakır indicated that:

> "In Europe these traitors, these separatists are talking against this village guard system and distributing declarations everywhere; and unfortunately, some of the members of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey are also sharing the same opinion with them."

Çakır's speech paved the way for the accusations that will take place in the following years regarding the relations between the MPs of the region and the PKK, and the attempt to drive these MPs out of the National Assembly and the political arena. This discourse that disregards the social and economic conditions of the region, the structural problems arising from the tribal system and a holistic approach of the Kurdish question which is shared by some of the MPs and the PKK, implies that the state does not show any economic or social

presence in the region and only gets involved as a political and military power. As a matter of fact, Abdülkadir Aksu, Minister of Internal Affairs also responded to Atalay's speech and stated that immediate inquiries were made in the alleged incidents involving village guards and upon discovery of a single negligence their contract were terminated, while adding that the number of such crimes were quite low. Aksu further stated that employment of approximately 15 thousand people as temporary village guards in fact provided a job opportunity for the people living in the region. It seems that the state is proud of its success in not giving a chance to discuss the negligence and abuses in the system of arming the people of the region for maintaining the security and providing economic development.

In the session of October 19, 1989, Cumhur Keskin of SHP reported that in Hilal village of the Uludere district, Hakkâri, 45 individuals were forced to become village guards and due to receiving double pressure from both of the sides they resigned from their duties. After this, they were taken under custody for 9 days and later were released on the condition that they will abandon their villages.[4] Again in Hakkâri, Çukurca district, the mayor of Hakkâri, brigade commander, mufti, chief of police, regiment commander and other officers organized a "Peace meeting" and invited the head of the villages and leading members of the tribe. One of the officers warned the invitees by saying "I am giving you one week notice; if you don't get armed and accept being a village guard, we will consider you as the PKK supporter" as Keskin recited. Keskin then proposed the Minister of Internal Affairs to go to the region together. Recep Ercüment Konukman, the Minister of State, replied that emigrants of Uludere and Yüksekova came to city center due to fear of militants and nobody was forced into being a village guard, on the contrary citizens "quickly clung onto" the village guard system. On November 14, 1989, Kamer Genç of SHP made a remark on this system that the citizens "quickly clung onto":

> "Well then, when these guards kill each other sometime in the future, who will claim responsibility? I am asking you, who will? Then, these guards will be just like 'Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments'.

Genç did not even feel the necessity to explain the metaphor. The accusation addressed to the state on people killing each other for the first time was recorded in the Assembly minutes with the metaphor of Kahramanmaraş

incidents, and this time repeated by the example of Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments. The analogy between the village guard system and the Hamidiye Cavalry shows that the state identifies the groups that are subject to or took a side in a social dispute as the elements causing the dispute and tries to "eliminate" them by deepening the disputes by giving the task of maintaining the security to another segment of the public.

The fact that this dispute cannot be eliminated by current methods, on the contrary will continue, was frequently verbalized at the National Assembly. In the session of January 11, 1990, Irfan Demiralp of DYP stated that the village guard system and the terror are intertwined and gave a warning:

> "Today, people who are earning money due to village guard system and are satisfied to some extent, believe that they will be deprived of their income with the eradication of terrorism. It's almost as if one is encouraging the other one; in other words terrorism encourages the guard system and the guard system encourages terrorism, in fact this has already been the case... One day, even if you eradicate the origins of the terror, some of the village guards, in order not to let the system be destroyed or lose their power and guns, will maybe then resort to terrorist methods themselves."

Even though the guard system is not the only or the most important element of the war industry that was created, this analysis is accurate since the village guard system is not only used as a tool to gain psychological superiority and regional domination but also empowered the tribal relations and opened new channels for the gun trade and usage.

The government, on the other hand, must have believed that the most important precaution that needs to be taken was to determine the clothing and type of the weapons of the village guards. On January 30, 1990, the second clause of the Village Law Article 74 was amended by adding the following sentence in bold:

> If there are serious indications of circumstances requiring state of emergency or acts of violence in villages or their surrounding, or if attacks on villagers' life and property increases, then "Temporary Village Guards" may be employed in provinces to be determined by the Cabinet, upon the proposal of the Governor and the approval of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The salaries of the temporary village guards that are appointed

> in this respect are to be paid for the duration of their duties and compensations will be given to them upon the end of duty **and the costs of the clothing is determined by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Finance and Customs.** The related expenses of the budget of the Ministry of Finance and Customs are to be transferred to the budget of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which then makes the necessary payments. (emphasis added)

Following sentence was also added to the first clause of the Article 78: The clothing and the type of the weapons are determined by the Minister of Internal Affairs.

In the session of February 6, 1990, Fuat Atalay of SHP draws attention to the emigration taking place in the region and stated that the most important cause of the emigration is the fact that citizens are caught between two fires:

> "...if you are a village guard, if you lay down your arms fearing that one day you will become the target of the illegal organization, this situation itself is a serious risk for you to be subject to the state terror."5

On the other hand, Abdülkadir Aksu, Minister of Internal Affairs defended this system:

> "It is out of question to force anyone to become village guard. On the contrary, numerous citizens have applied and are still in the line for being a temporary village guard. The number of temporary village guards was 5,744 at the beginning, now this number increased to 17,734... It goes against reality to think that some people are forced to become village guards considering that citizens are getting in line for being one."6

The fact that the claim of forcing people into becoming village guards which is defined as a "state terror" is retaliated with the claim that citizens are getting in line for being a guard does not cause the role of the head of the village guards who are the actual managers of the system to be overlooked. On February 7, 1990, Kamer Genç of CHP informed that the state is giving money to the leaders of the tribes and the head of the village guards. Genç also added that the ones who would not want to be deprived of this income will provoke the incidents in the region, let alone prevent them.

In the session of July 19, 1990, Cumhur Keskin of SHP reported that "an

announcement signed by the 'Güneydoğunun Ölümsüz Koruculari' (Immortal Village Guards of the Southeast) was secretly distributed to the houses and workplaces of the people living in the East." He further asks who are "the founders of this organization calling itself shortly GÖK, which threatens and attempts to intimidate the public" and what is their relation with the state. Abdülkadir Aksu, Minister of Internal Affairs explained that such an announcement was not distributed, such an organization does not exist and the government will not allow any illegal actions. On September 25, 1990, Aksu informed that the number of temporary village guards reached at 25,600 and on November 6, 1990, he stated that the village guard system "demonstrated a great progress" as there are 31,000 positions and currently 27,250 individuals were appointed as village guards. On March 7, 1991, Orhan Veli Yıldırım of SHP took on the floor and expressed that the government is delegating its duty of preserving the security of life and property of the people living in the region to the 'village guard corporation'. He further criticized the understanding which approaches this system as an employment issue.

c. Consolidation of the village guard system: New governments, old methods (1991-1996)

> *... I assume that there is a slip of the tongue while saying 'some of them are involved in smuggling, some of them are doing this and that' regarding the temporary village guards... If there are wrongdoers, you will clean out those people; however... the village guard system cannot be abolished just because there are wrongdoers.*
>
> Ünal Erkan, MP of DYP

During the ANAP government between the years 1987-1991 when the village guard system was implemented, the members of the opposition parties had many speeches claiming that the village guard system is an exposure of the political, social, economic and military weakness of the state. As for the members of the governing party, they stated that this system was not launched by them; rather, they only made a regulation regarding the payments of the village guards. They also added that the village guards act as a deterrent force against the assault of the organization and the system created a job opportunity

in the region. The emphasis on the historical background of the system indicates the aim of handing over the responsibility to someone else, but also points to a weakness of the state. "Improving" the working conditions of the village guards and considering this system as an employment issue can be read as the acknowledgement of the state's weakness and consolidation of this weakness. Considering armed civil citizens as a deterrent force in a war, not to mention this is not the reality and assuming there is no other intention in this, is an expression of the weakness itself.

Following the elections of November 6, 1991, the Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel of the DYP-SHP coalition party pledged in the session of November 25, 1991 that they will review regulations regarding the state of emergency, regional governorship and the village guard system. In the session of November 28, 1991, Necmettin Erbakan, MP of Welfare Party (RP) criticized the government while reminding that the parties of the coalition used to say "we will abolish the village guard system", but now they started to say "we will review it". In fact, it is possible to say that Erbakan was especially targeting DYP and not SHP, since most of the speeches that are against the village guard system are made by the members of SHP. Even though SHP was a coalition partner, their criticisms regarding the village guard system continued. As a matter of fact, in the session of March 23rd, 1992, Muzaffer Arıkan of SHP pointed out the inconveniences and the problems of the system by mentioning that village guards had been carrying out an armed struggle against terrorism for the last 7 years although their names suggest that they are temporary, however this is not the duty of the village guards. Gürhan Çelebican of ANAP defended the village guard system and said:

> "... the village guards should be institutionalized under a new name such as 'village police'... like the sheriff department in the United States of America and the whole region should be convinced that this system is not temporary."

Assuming that Çelebican is aware of the U.S. regulations on the local administration and the fact that sheriffs are elected, it is curious why he did not mention the enormous structural transformation that such a system requires.

In the session of August 25, 1992, İsmet Sezgin, Minister of Internal Affairs, took on the floor upon the question of Mehmet Sincar of SHP regarding

the murder of a citizen in Midyat. Sezgin informed that an investigation took place following the allegations that the village guards were involved in the incident. As a result of the investigation, ten village guards were arrested and put into prison and the temporary village guards who were involved were discharged.[7] Following another allegation that again took place in Midyat; a group of citizens were murdered by the village guards, Sezgin stated that no relation were found upon the investigation that links temporary village guards to the incident. He added that the statements of the wounded individuals such as "We were shot by the temporary village guards" were deliberately given by some ill-intentioned people who visited them at the hospital, took their photos and talked to them. In the session of December 17, 1992, Hasan Basri Eller of CHP informed that the number of temporary village guards is 39 thousand, the monthly income of a guard is 1 million 686 thousand TL and the annual cost of these village guards is 732 billion TL. He then remarked that the budget saved for the village guard system is higher than the total budget of the Presidency, the Court of Accounts, the Constitutional Court, the Council of State, the Supreme Court, the Statistical Institute, the Coast Guard Command and the Ministry of Environment.

In the session of April 28, 1993, Zübeyir Aydar of SHP took on the floor and expressed that as a part of an investigating committee, they wanted to visit an evacuated village which was burned in Diyarbakır. At the entrance of the village they were stopped by the military men and village guards where they pointed guns at the committee. 2 months ago, similar incident had happened to the MPs Mehmet Sincar and Ali Yiğit in Mardin where no inquiry took place about these people. Aydar expressed that this is an assault against the parliament and the parliamentary democracy. As a matter of fact, the targets of these assaults are a certain members of the parliaments and the political parties that they are a member of. The fact that the government and the state continuously attempted to damage the reputation of the political parties in the eyes of the public whose members criticized the village guard system, can be interpreted that the village guards who "gain the support of the state" are not only committing a crime, but also serving the state in order to cast aside the politics and preserve the authoritarian structure stemming from the militaristic state. In fact, on June 29, 1993, Coşkun Gökalp of SHP criticized the fact that the village guards are accepted as being on state's side and the ones who are not village guards are considered as

"traitor, enemy of the state". Gökalp then asked:

> "When I say 'I don't want the village guard system', do I become a traitor?"

Upon the loss of the President Turgut Özal, Süleyman Demirel was elected as the new president. Tansu Çiller became DYP's leader and the prime minister. In the session of June 30, 1993, Çiller expressed that the state of emergency regulation will be repealed "by implementing a new legal regulation that will not create a power and authority gap", they embrace the abolition of the village guard system "as a principle", but for this above all "the employment and security problems that may arise after the termination of the village guard system should be solved". However, after two months, in the session of September 1st, 1993, a parliamentary question was submitted by various members of the parliament, that demanded explanation on the issue that the gendarmes and the village guards opened fire to a committee conducting an investigation at Diyarbakır; the village guards are mistreating the people; the villagers are forced to become village guards and the innocent citizens are killed by the village guards. Mehmet Gazioğlu, Minister of Internal Affairs responded to these questions and stated that these kind of allegations "are perceived to be done in order to let the terrorists roam freely in the region by abolishing the temporary village guard system that is already in the target of the terrorist organization PKK and to pacify the temporary village guards (GKK) and the security forces."

On December 24, 1993, Selim Sadak of SHP made an analysis of the situation that refutes this statement:

> "The Kurdish reality that Mr. Demirel used to utter a lot in the past is now entrusted to the General Staff where the suppression with guns became the dominant policy. It is because of this policy to suppress the Kurdish issue with weapons that the taxes and rises obtained from the poor people are being spent on the sikorskys, cobras, panzers, careers, weapons and vehicles, village guards, informers and spies... Separatists are the ones who cast us, the elected ones, aside and delegate the head of the village guards for solving the issue."

What Sadak expressed as casting aside occurred in the session of March 2nd, 1994 when the parliament voted for lifting the parliamentary immunities of 22 MPs along with Sadak and 5MPs were put into prison, thus forcing them out of political arena. This mentality that creates an organic bond between the

PKK and the members of the parliament criticizing the village guard system and tolerates the assault of the village guards against some parliamentarians played a crucial role in transferring some of the heads of the village guards to the National Assembly while some of the parliamentarians are pushed out of the Assembly and put into prisons. In the sessions of November 16, 1994, Coşkun Gökalp of SHP informed that a head of the village guard will be the candidate of ANAP from the first rank of the list in the by-elections scheduled for December 4. Gökalp further questioned the explanation for putting "a person engaged in village guard system" on the first rank of parliamentary candidate list. On December 19, 1994, Mustafa Zeydan of DYP took on the floor and expressed that he cannot understand why people are objecting to the village guard system and the special team. Zeydan further added that "that village guard is serving by the state and by the people." Coşkun Gökalp of SHP explained in reply to Zeydan why he is against the village guard system by referring to the news in which "8 security officers were fallen martyr in an accidental gunshot fired by temporary village guards" and "The other day, relatives of M. Ali Yücebağ, former mayor from ANAP, who are village guards opened fire at the house of Sadık Çetinkaya who was elected as the mayor as the candidate of SHP at the local elections of March 27."[8]

In the session of March 7, 1995, upon the parliamentary question submitted by Fuat Çay of SHP that demanded clarification on the claims that "the village guards, by the power they get from the state, are earning side incomes by selling basic consumption goods at a higher price at the black market", Mayor of State of Emergency Region responded that they have not received such an information. It was not the first time that the members of the ruling party claimed that they have not received information regarding the allegation that the village guards are engaged in illegal activities. They actually reinforced the regulations that create these problems and yet again, they declared the state's weakness which came up in the past on different occasions. Finally, the black market, being an important tool of the war industry, also took its place in the reports of the Assembly minutes and in the list of the crimes committed by the village guards "with the power they get from the state".

The table in next page is presented by the Minister of Internal Affairs Nahit Menteşe to Mehmet Emin Sever of SHP, during the session of April 18, 1995, on the parliamentary question regarding the temporary village guards.

The Current Position and Salaries of the Temporary Village Guards (GKK)

State of Emergency	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	Income of Gkks TL*
BATMAN	-	-	1171	1114	1947	2293	3447	3487	5.864.000
BİNGÖL	793	873	937	927	1213	1430	2699	2715	5.864.000
BİTLİS	650	644	784	1542	1847	2601	3613	3664	5.864.000
D.BAKIR	2105	2111	2158	2029	2020	2727	5851	5858	5.864.000
HAKKARİ	3665	4567	6692	7123	7487	6719	7546	7263	6.164.000
MARDİN	3271	3170	2488	2544	2604	2966	3657	3738	5.864.000
SİİRT	2565	2565	2091	3108	3694	4065	4799	4801	6.164.000
ŞIRNAK	-	-	3847	4298	4525	4630	7357	7597	6.164.000
TUNCELİ	-	-	-	12	11	11	350	384	5.864.000
VAN	847	779	6444	6754	6948	7084	8004	7936	4.464.000
TOTAL	13896	14710	26614	29451	32296	34526	47323	47443	-
Neighboring									
ADIYAMAN	793	789	794	775	975	1173	1655	1655	4.464.000
ELAZIĞ	-	-	64	236	563	1370	2266	2320	4.464.000
MUŞ	129	175	168	53	39	234	1760	2053	5.464.000
TOTAL	922	964	1026	1064	1577	2777	5681	6028	-
SUBTOTAL	14818	15674	27640	30515	33873	37303	53004	53471	-
Critical									
AĞRI	-	676	675	653	696	531	1492	1969	4.364.000
GAZİANTEP	-	-	46	270	467	495	639	646	3.464.000
K.MARAŞ	-	-	-	687	1682	1895	2358	2350	3.464.000
KARS	-	474	430	560	361	447	689	691	4.064.000
ARDAHAN	-	-	-	-	110	82	126	125	4.364.000
IĞDIR	-	-	-	-	124	107	339	423	4.464.000
MALATYA	-	398	639	929	972	985	1384	1402	3.764.000
ŞANLIURFA	-	493	551	570	840	849	1109	1109	3.714.000
TOTAL	-	2041	2341	3669	5252	5391	8136	8715	-
GRAND TOTAL	14818	17715	29981	34184	39125	42694	61140	62186	-

* Even though it is not stated explicitly, the numbers in the relevant column is from 1995 and represents the gross wage paid for per each village guard.

In the session of June 25, 1995 the resolution issued by the Prime Ministry that proposed prolonging the state of emergency prevailing in ten cities for another 4 months was discussed. During the session, Hüsamettin Korkutata of RP took on the floor and, as if he is interpreting the relation between different dimensions of the village guard system, expressed that "today the state of emergency in the region became a sector itself; with its village guards, leaders of the head of the village guards, confessors, spies roaming freely in the country and national-international supporters, it truly became a sector where trillions of liras are changing hands, and this sector gets rid of the ones that oppose to it by slandering, intimidation or in other ways."

In the session of March 7, 1996, Mesut Yılmaz, Prime Minister of the DYP-ANAP Coalition Party, stated that the temporary village guard system will be revised and the defective aspects will be reformed. On March 14, 1996, Ülkü Güney, Minister of Internal Affairs, also stated that "we also accept the necessity of the reform of the village guard system where it should be defined within a legal framework". Güney, however, added that "we should also not forget that it is PKK who objects to the temporary village guard system the most".

Yet, on June 18, 1996, İstemihan Talay of Democratic Left Party (DSP) informed that the resources that should be used in development projects are instead transferred "to the monthly income of the village guards who are more than 50 thousand and to the imaginary investors that are the partisans of the political parties". Talay also added that:

> "It is also a fact that some of these financial opportunities are being transferred -indirectly- to the vault of the PKK whom we are fighting against."

Ünal Erkan of DYP, showed reaction to the allegation that the village guards are "aiding the PKK":

> "... I assume that there is a slip of the tongue while saying 'some of them are involved in smuggling, some of them are doing this and that' regarding the temporary village guards... If there are wrongdoers, you will clean out those people; however... the village guard system cannot be abolished just because there are wrongdoers".

d. A new precaution regarding the village guard system: "Reform" (1996-2002)

> *Maybe, in the meantime, it will occur to some people and will say 'you are already a head of the village guards'... I am proud of this duty. Because, I am a citizen of the State of Republic, and out of respect for it, I am here, and a deputy at the moment...Regarding these units [the village guards] as potential criminals, speaking ill of them and keep on saying 'Well, the village guard gang, police gang'... These will harm Turkey... We are a state of law. If we have any criminals they will be punished whoever they are.*
>
> Mustafa Zeydan, MP of Democratic Turkey Party

In the session of July 3rd, 1996, Necmettin Erbakan, the Prime Minister of DYP-RP Coalition Party declared that the temporary village guard system will be revised and defective aspects the will be reformed, just like his predecessor prime ministers said. It was Mehmet Ağar, the Minister of Internal Affairs, who shed light on what is meant by the term "reform" during the session of July 24, 1996. Ağar emphasized following issues:

> "... defining the status of our temporary village guards...to make legal regulations in order to provide certain financial aids entitled 'security compensation' to our people who carried out their duties under heavy conditions and gained certain financial aids so that these aids will not disappear together with the abolition of the state of emergency"

As a matter of fact, the relevant legal regulations soon enough took their place in the agenda of the Assembly. On July 30, 1996, Mehmet Salih Yıldırım of ANAP explained the amendments made in the first clause of the additional article 8 of the law numbered 6136 Relating to Firearms, Knives and Other Tools:

> "The pistols and bullets provided by the Police Department will be sold to the Police Department personnel and bazaar and district watchmen for their use on duty at the price of a private inventory weapon. The method and procedures for taking back of the weapon sold in case of leave, expulsion or reasons alike from the personnel and the sale form and conditions, lost, damage, repair, out of standard shall be determined by the regulation. The term "act" is used instead of "offense" in the law and

> the penalty threshold was lowered from 1 year to 6 months. The persons that have court verdicts due to the convictions by firearms and that have imprisonment for more than six months shall by no means be permitted to carry or own firearms, even if they can benefit from amnesty. All of their crimes will be pardoned and no prosecution shall be executed if the persons that are chosen as voluntary village guardsman by the district governors and the persons that are still serving as temporary village guardsman shall return the pistols and the bullets to the district offices specified by the Cabinet in 45 days after this law is in effect."

The regulation on the return of the guns of the citizens sold by the state and the fact that there will be a reduced sentence for the "acts" committed with these guns, people returning their guns without a license will not be persecuted and all of their crimes will be pardoned probably were not considered enough for the reform of the defective aspects of the village guard system: Yıldırım also summarized the innovations introduced by the draft law for including an additional clause to the Law numbered 442 on Village Law:

> "The procedures and the principles regarding the employment of the temporary and voluntary village guardsmen were regulated. The persons benefiting from the Repentance Law now has the chance of becoming a village guard. Temporary village guards will receive additional pay according to their hierarchical status and the region they are in charge. Temporary and voluntary village guards will receive recompense according to their level of success. The procedures and the principles regarding treatment and drug costs of the family members whom village guards are obliged to look after were determined. It was found appropriate that the funeral cost of them will be covered by the state. The procedure regarding the objection to a disciplinary action and the punishment was clearly regulated."

The fact that people benefiting from the repentance law can become a village guard, existing hierarchical structure of the system provides a base for additional pay, giving "recompense" according to "success" and payment of the healthcare and death expenses of the village guards by the state create the illusion as if all those criticisms against the village guard system were vocalized in another country's parliament.

In fact, despite these new regulations, the problems created by the village guard system were not eliminated; on the contrary, they gained new dimensions

and continued to be vocalized at the National Assembly. On October 10, 1996, Ataullah Hamidi and 22 other MPs of ANAP, among other issues, following

> "The fact that a task force chief and four police officers of Hakkâri Police Department Special Operation Division, twelve village guards and one confessor were members of an organized crime network that was involved in numerous unsolved murder, extortion, armed robbery and theft was explained by the governmental bodies"

presented a parliamentary inquiry in order to investigate the dimension of the relation between the illegal crime organizations and the state and incidents where the security forces were involved. Even though the inquiry was not accepted, on November 20, 1996, a written reply given by Meral Akşener, Minister of Internal Affairs, regarding a question on village guards confirms the criticisms that took place in the inquiry: From 1985 to today, 23,222 temporary village guards were discharged. The crimes where the village guards were involved are recorded as; 225 murder, 71 abduction, 64 abduction of girls and women, 65 drug smuggling and 58 weapons and ammo smuggling. In the session of November 12, 1996, Istemihan Talay of DSP reminded that "the incident revealed by the accident that took place in Susurluk also included the relation between mafias and politics but as well as the feudal relations" and further expressed that approximately 60 thousand village guards serves as "a guarantee for the consolidation of feudalism in the region". The cost of this guarantee is mentioned by the written reply of Akşener on November 20:

> By October 22nd, 1996, 62,034 temporary village guards, 14,872 voluntary village guards are carrying out their duties in the state of emergency cities, neighboring, critical and other cities. Including the pensions and compensations, between 12,615,000 TL and 15,765,000 TL are paid to the temporary village guards. The social security provided to the village guards are as follows:
> 1. Clothing Allowance: Each year clothing allowance is provided for the village guards according to the regulation on" Clothing Allowances for Civil Servants".
> 2. Leave of Absences and Health Status: Village guardsmen are granted leave of absence for a total of (15) days annually. In case of sickness, with a medical report obtained from the state health institutions and agencies, they may also receive absence due to health issues for no more than (30) days annually. Bodily injuries and other situations that require treatment

> incurred on duty, the village guards may again receive absence for the duration of a medical report obtained from the state health institutions and agencies. This duration shall not exceed (6) months. The salaries of the village guards will be paid during their absences.
> 3. Compensations: "Upon physical injury, disablement or death during term of duty of temporary village guards, Law numbered 2330 on Compensation in Cash and Pension shall apply by the proposal of the Governor and the approval of the Ministry of Internal Affairs." For the village guards who have fallen a martyr, an amount that is equal to (60) times as much as the income of a highest-level state official will be paid as compensation, a pension will be provided for the spouses and children. For the village guards that became disabled, compensation equal to 25-75% of the aforementioned amount adjusted according to the degree of their disability will be given and a pension will be provided. In case of leave from duty for health issues and dismissal from duty due to administrative obligations, temporary village guards receive a compensation of an amount found by multiplying twice the most recent monthly pay by their years of employment as stated under the Cabinet decision 85/9678 taken on 10 July 1985.

The statistics regarding the village guards and the crimes committed by them, the budget appropriated for the village guards and in this respect the relation between the state and illegal organizations continued to be a hot topic especially at budget meetings. For instance, on December 9, 1996, Hilmi Develi, MP of DSP, stated that the budget of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce is 14 trillion and 387 billion liras, in other words same amount of budget appropriated for the village guards, and further criticized the budget of 1997.[8] The speech of Veli Aksoy of DSP on December 18, 1996 deserves to be noted: Aksoy expressed that it is a known fact due to the reports of the inspectors that a large portion of the state tenders announced by the investing ministry in the southeastern cities are given to the head of the village guards. He further added:

> "It is a known fact that the heads of the village guards that won a tender are awarded with a much higher portion than they truly deserved due to the secluded quality of the system, lack of inspection and the relations with the high-rank officials in the region, and furthermore, they transfer a significant portion of the awarded share to the terrorist organizations."

The concerns regarding the fact that the budget saved for the village guards is high and is not entirely open to inspection are further nourished by,

as it is mentioned before, the fact that the village guards are getting armed. For instance, on March 11, 1997, Meral Akşener, Minister of Internal Affairs, gave a written reply upon the question of Tevfik Diker of DYP. The ambiguity of the classification of guns provided by the state, guns sold by the state and personal guns reached its peak through Akşener's statement:

> "Temporary Village Guards that are on duty in the state of emergency cities returned (22,779) weapons whose origins are unknown. (19,664) of these weapons were licensed for use and were given back to the village guards. Not all the returned weapons are gone through a ballistics analysis, only the ones seem suspicious by the governors are inspected. (1,033) weapons were returned to the Siverek District, Şanlıurfa Police Headquarters... regarding the origins of the returned weapons, none of them belonged to the state."

The fact that providing license to the weapons retrieved from the village guards that were not the property of the state or whose origins were unknown, or no investigation was carried out on how the village guards obtained these weapons resembles a dirty money laundering operation. The arbitrariness regarding the ballistics analysis of the weapons whose origins are unknown nullifies the argument which claims that the state owns the monopoly of legitimate violence. The fact that the state condones some "acts" not only weakens and broadens the monopoly on legitimate violence but also by itself is an abuse. In the session of April 8, 1997, the statistics recited by Akşener provides some information about the possible extent that this abuse may reach:

> "In our country, 62,654 temporary village guards are on duty in the regions of state of emergency, neighboring and critical cities...In Batman 3,445, in Bingöl 2,678, in Bitlis 3,759, in Diyarbakır 5,842, in Hakkâri 7,596, in Siirt 4,809, in Şırnak 7,520, in Tunceli 377, in Van 8,186, in Mardin 3,565, in Muş 2,036, in Adıyaman 1,633, in Ağrı 2,207, in Ardahan 113, in Elazığ 2,307, in Gaziantep 593, in Kilis 37, in Kahramanmaraş 2,342, in Kars 675, in Iğdır 479, in Malatya 1,343 and in Şanlıurfa 1,112 temporary village guards are employed."

In fact, the role of the village guards in weapon and drug trafficking taking place in the region has extended to the networks outside the region. In the session of May 27, 1997, regarding the resolutions provided by some of the

MPs of RP, ANAP, CHP and DSP on elucidating the relation between the state and the illegal organizations and its connection to the accident that took place in Susurluk, Fikri Sağlar of CHP expressed that:

> "It is understood that during the operations of the organization taking place in the southeastern region, special team policemen along with village guards and PKK confessors were used... What lies before us is the fact that drug smuggling is done with the state's official vehicles and even with the military helicopters in which these were reflected in the court reports and confessed by some of the perpetrators."

Sema Pişkinsüt of DSP reifies the findings of Sağlar:

> "It is alleged that Sedat Bucak is the supporter of the organization within the group in the parliament where the feudal structure and the village guard system have extended to. On a local scale, some of the tribes and village guards are being used. Some security forces partake in the profits from the terror taking place in the Southeast, just like the case in Yüksekova gang."

In response to the allegations, Meral Akşener, Minister of Internal Affairs wanted to demonstrate that the government is in control of the situation by informing that the people demanding a ransom from the relatives of a citizen, faking as if he was kidnapped by the terrorists, are caught by Yüksekova Gendarmerie Command where 1 police commissioner, 1 police officer, 1 confessor and 3 temporary village guards that were involved in the incident were arrested. Mehmet Ağar of DYP took on the floor in order to reply to the allegations as well and stated that Sedat Bucak has fulfilled his duty given by the state and had been a village guard on the region for 3 years, was not involved in illegal acts. Ağar further explained the reason for the criticisms of the village guard system:

> "Abdullah Öcalan made an assessment; 'The chief of the Counter-Guerrilla is Mehmet Ağar. He took our lives by the village guard gangs he established in Lice, Siverek, Silopi, Nusaybin and Şırnak, he didn't let us in there; now, we're okay' he says. 'Now, village guard system must be abolished, Kurdish problem exists...' These are the same discourses used by PKK. There is no Kurdish problem, there is the Southeast problem. The reason for our success is this: By becoming one with the people in the region, we segregated our citizens of Kurdish origin from the PKK. The

> village guards take the main role in all the cross-border operations; they have 50, 100, 500 martyrs on their side; no one has the right to disregard these people. No one could disregard the big struggle that Turkey carried out over there until these days."

Contrary to Akşener who tacitly accepted the existence of Yüksekova gang, by these words Ağar asserted that these "gangs" are not involved in illegal activities since these kind of mission are given to the law officers by the state while adding that criticism of the village guard system is actually the discourse of the PKK. He was also forced to remind the members of the Assembly the great success they showed in the "Southeast problem" by becoming one with the "citizens of Kurdish origin". A similar recall was made by Ünal Erkan of DYP during the session of October 2nd, 1997 while discussing lifting the state of emergency that was still in practice in Batman, Bitlis and Bingöl:

> "I am concerned that stating that the village guard system will be abolished will have a negative impact on the moods of the gallant village guards who still carry on their duty of fighting against the terrorism with great success... Temporary village guard system must continue; however, the parts which need a reform should go through a reform. It should not be forgotten that the regulations that will be done in this respect must include the retirement rights of the village guards and the healthcare services must be provided for the village guards and their relatives just like the other civil servants."

The reform of the village guard system is interpreted differently by political parties. For the ones supporting the village guard system, "reform" means to improve the social conditions of the village guards, for the ones criticizing it means to keep them away from the weapons and crimes and guiding them to other areas of employment. In the session of December 21st, 1997, Mustafa Zeydan of DTP made a few remarks that shed light on the source of these different interpretations:

> "I would like to mention the village guard system that is a part of or under the command of the Armed Forces. Maybe, in the meantime, it will occur to some people and will say 'you are already head of the village guards'... whichever unit's head I am regarding all the services for the security of the state, I am proud of that duty. Because, I am a citizen of

> the State of Republic, and out of respect for it, I am here, and a deputy at the moment... Regarding these units [the village guards] as potential criminals, speaking ill of them and keep on saying 'Well, the village guard gang, police gang'... These will harm Turkey... We are a state of law. If we have any criminals they will be punished whoever they are."

However, the gravity of the gang accusations that Zeydan refuses to take into consideration is crystal clear. It is evident that there is no consensus in the Assembly on what will truly hurt Turkey. On June 23rd, 1998, a censure motion against State Minister Eyüp Aşık was presented on the grounds that, despite having known the location of Mahmut Yıldırım, code-named "Yeşil" (Green), who has an arrest warrant against him, Aşık failed to provide this information to the authorities. During the debate regarding the censure motion, Orhan Veli Yıldırım of CHP informed that one of the close comrades of Yeşil is Ahmet Cem Ersever, an important member of the Counter Guerrilla and the commander of JITEM (Gendarmerie Intelligence Organization) Southeast Region. The JITEM members under the command of Ersever established Anadolu Halk Hareketi Cephesi (Anatolia People's Movement Front) where this front consists of three lines:

> "At the head of the line that starts with Diyarbakır, Yeşil takes his place as the hit man and Zinnar as the mastermind. At Hakkâri line, the Babats (village guard) and as hitman a confessor code-named Havar were in charge. Another team was in charge of Mardin line...in the interview entitled 'The Counter-Guerrilla Reality".... published at Tercüman Newspaper on 8 August 1993... Ali Öncü speaks of Ersever as the commander of Anadolu Halk Cephesi and states that it consists of members of JITEM, confessors and village guards."

On the other hand, these kinds of claims were not taken into consideration and instead concentrated on carrying on with the reforms of the village guard system in the way the supporters of the system understood. In the session of July 23rd, 1998, the Minister of Internal Affairs Murat Başesgioğlu announced that the work regarding the improvement of the economic and social condition of the temporary village guards was finalized and were presented as a draft law to the agenda of the Cabinet:

"After the passing of this draft law, ambiguities on the issues such as, legal status, duties and working principles, social and personal rights of the temporary and voluntary village guards, will be eliminated. With this draft, treatment expenses together with the payment of pensions and compensations and clothing expenses are anticipated to be covered up. Operation compensation for the ones joining an operation and the monetary award for the successful ones will be provided. The treatment of the relatives of the temporary and voluntary village guards whom are responsible for their care will be covered. In addition to all, the village guards' duties, loyalty to command and order, assignment methods, training and inspection methods and principals, records and absences, being charged to outside of their duty areas and cross-border operations are regulated under certain principals and the public opinion's concerns regarding this matter will be responded."

e. New interpretation of "reform": "Pacta sunt servanda" (2002-2009)

If this village guard system was implemented in another country and if 1,357 of these village guards were martyred to this day, their statues would be put in those countries; from age 7 to 70, all the members of that nation would express their gratitude and blessings to them day and night.
Ümmet Kandoğan, MP of DYP

Approximately after three years, the village guard system was again brought to agenda in the same logical framework of reform. In the session of January 23rd, 2002, after reminding the history, content and the benefits of the system Mehmet Salih Yıldırım of DSP expressed that:

"At the beginning, these people were engaged in breeding and plant production at their own settlement and sustained a productive position, but unfortunately, in the course of time, they adopted the village guard system as a way of living and became a consumer class... Unfortunately, the income of the village guards is nowhere near enough for them... today, the income they receive is between 139.000.000 and 152.000.000 liras[9] and this income... is shared among at least 2 or 3 families of village guards... Village guards have no medical treatment expenses; neither they nor their families receive treatment. If Armed Forces extend their hand of service and bring help to them, then they may have a chance to go

> through a treatment. Village guards do not have subsistence allowance. Village guards do not have transportation allowance...It is only natural for them to demand their security from their own state now. There is no reason for their children to inherit their guns. We have the obligation to rescue them from the consumerism and help them become qualified and productive. Many inconveniences and problems related to village guards have happened. 20,360 village guards resigned, 36,104 village guards were discharged; however, in the last ten years, I may say that these inconveniences and problems related to the village guards are completely gone. The annual number of crimes where village guards are involved is 289; this amount is equal to 7 in a thousand and this is the most significant indicator that the inconveniences and problems happened in the past are largely gone now. Now, the village guards have some expectations from the state: They want their future to be secured...They want to have Bağ-Kur, pension fund for self-employed, just like the village headmen. Appropriation and premium until this day should be paid by the state, and the rest should be completed by them... What these people, the whole country and nation expect from this honorable state sets a good example of pacta sunt servanda."

Since 2002 until today, meeting the demands which Yıldırım defined as "a good example of pacta sunt servanda" has been the main course of the Assembly's agenda regarding the village guard system. The following words of Hayri Kozakçıoğlu of DYP during the session of June 19, 2002:

> "while we are on our way to lift the state of emergency, the situation of the village guards living in the region must be reconsidered; the ones who gained pension rights or came to an old age or could retire incurring short-term debts should be given pension rights; the ones that do not retire should be employed as security guards at other state institutions."

As well as the expression of Muharrem Doğan of ANAP during the session of December 22nd, 2003:

> "If the government is still in need of the village guard system owing to terrorism, then the health and social security of the village guards working for a minimum wage should be provided."

are the typical examples of this course. Nevertheless, the criticisms against the state of emergency and thus the village guard system, has continued to be vocalized at the Assembly, even if they are lesser compared to the past. In the

session of July 16, 2004, the "Draft Law on Compensation for Damage Arising from Terror and Combating Terror" was discussed. During the discussions, Naci Aslan of Justice and Development Party (AK Parti) expressed the following views:

> "In my opinion, this [village guard system] is a crime against humanity. There is no such establishment or institution in democratic countries. This proves that our country has not completed its transition to democracy yet...I'm not saying we should kick out the village guards or destroy them; we should watch over them; but, we must absolutely take the weapons from their hands. They are not letting our citizens return back to their villages as a part of the village return project, they are resorting to force, using Kalashnikovs and most of the time killing them. Let's take the weapons out of their hands. Let's appoint them to certain posts in various ministries... as is known, according to the report entitled 'Humanitarian Situation of the Displaced –I am emphasizing this- Kurdish Population in Turkey' published by Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on March 2002, they urged Turkey to; grant full access to the region for international humanitarian organizations, lift the state of emergency, abolish the village guard system that raises the most serious human rights concerns, allow for individual returns, not to precondition the assistance by the declaration that the cause of the flight was fear of the PKK and provide displaced persons with compensation for damaged property."

It is observed that such calls even made by the deputies of the ruling party were not heeded and the main demand that shapes the decisions of the government is the regulations on the social security rights of the village guards, as vocalized by some of the AK Party deputies. In the session of December 20, 2005, Minister of Internal Affairs Abdülkadir Aksu announced that as Ministry of Internal Affairs they are in the process of preparing a comprehensive draft regarding the village guards and presented this to the attention of all institutions. However, as the draft delayed, they have thought "we should at least take care of the healthcare problems of the village guards" and brought a draft for the amendment of a single article of the Village Law. With this amendment, the dependents of the village guards may also benefit from the health services-just like the owners of green card-. On December 28, 2005, Mehmet Eraslan of AK Party argued that with this regulation, the right to healthcare was provided to the village guards, but their premiums should also be paid since this is a constitutional obligation. On the other hand, Hakki Ülkü of CHP stated that this

regulation may be considered equal to informal employment of workers. He further expressed;

> "The state which plans to provide green card to the village guards should either do it by claiming them working under employment contracts provided by the SSK or the agricultural insurance should be included in Bağ-Kur."

Halil Ünlütepe of CHP asserted that if this law passes, the principles of the rule of law will be violated; upon the submission of an application of any village guard not having any social security to the European Court of Human Rights this law will be cancelled. For this reason, he demanded the law to be rescinded and preparation of a more appropriate regulation. However, in the same session, the said rights to health were regulated by adding the following clause to the Village Law numbered 442, Article 74:

> Village guards, who are not covered by any social security institution, as well as their dependents, will be issued a Green Card while, at the same time, exempting them from the requirements set forth by the 'Law Concerning the State Coverage of Treatment Expenses of Citizens who lack the Ability to Pay by Issuing a Green Card' No. 3816. In the determination of the dependants, the rules of the Civil Servant Law No, 657 will apply. These rules will equally apply to those village guards who left the job after minimum of 10 years and were paid reparations, as well as the healthcare expenses of their spouses and dependents including parents and children.

In the session of May 28, 2006, on behalf of other deputies who are not content with these kind of regulations Hüseyin Güler of AK Party asked whether the village guards are acknowledged as martyrs, and if not, any legal regulation on this subject is being considered. On December 12, 2006, Muharrem Doğan of ANAP informed that 57,860 temporary village guards, their spouses and children own green card nation-wide and added that he finds this derogatory. In the session of March 27, 2007, Mehmet Tatar of AK Party reported that in his constituency, Şırnak, village guards want to apply to the European Courts of Human Rights on their social security and added that in that case, both himself and the state will be hurt, for this reason the village guards should also be granted

"martyrdom status" just like military men. Eventually, the pressure on the improvement of the social rights of the village guards yielded results and following the discussions on the draft resolution during the session of May 27, 2007 several regulations were accepted.[10] As approved and defined by Osman Aslan of AK Party, these regulations grant "in fact, a civil servant status" to the village guards. Abdürrahim Aksoy, another AK Party deputy, explained the revision of the law and the amendments:

> "The village guards who have been on duty for twenty years, the ones started the duty when they were 40 years old are now sixty-two years old. Even though they are sixty two years old, none of them is putting down their weapons, because, the moment they put down the weapons their income will be cut and after this age they will find themselves in a situation which they cannot look after themselves. Therefore with this draft resolution, the persons turning fifty five, and whose years of employment is fifteen years will be able to retire and will receive and sufficient amount of retirement income calculated by the 5,000 index number. Again, with this law, persons who turned fifty five and whose years of employment is less than fifteen years and the persons turning fifty five however dismissed due to health and administrative reasons and the persons who died will receive a compensation equals to the amount calculated by multiplying the 20,000 index number with the monthly income coefficient of the public employees. Upon death while receiving this monthly income, the widow spouses will get a monthly payment 75% of this income. Again, by this law, persons turning fifty five, and whose years of employment is less than ten years, will either serve for ten years and get retired or could leave their duty on their will and get a compensation. Temporary village guards who want to leave their duty on their will without turning fifty five, regardless of their years of employment will receive an amount calculated by multiplying the 20,000 index number with the monthly income coefficient as compensation. Again, by this law, upon death of temporary village guards during duty, spouse and children, if none mother and father, if none siblings will receive an amount calculated by multiplying the 15,000 index number with the monthly income coefficient for the public employee as death allowance. Again, by this law, temporary village guards who have fallen a martyr or are invalid to the degree they cannot work, according to the priority list, one of his spouses, children or siblings will be permanently employed at a public institution where they will be working as a civil servant subject to Civil Servant Law. Again, by this law, regulations

> regarding the employment, criteria of the employment, disciplinary punishments, the conditions requiring dismissal of the temporary village guards and the head of the village guards and the other issues covered up in the Law will be prepared by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and will be adapted by a regulation issued by the Cabinet."

Even though Ümmet Kandoğan of DYP appreciated the amendments he nevertheless expressed that "for the perpetuity of Turkey whatever we may do for these people won't be enough" and added:

> "If this village guard system was implemented in another country and if 1,357 of these village guards were martyred to this day, their statues would be put in those countries; from age 7 to 70, all the members of that nation would express their gratitude and blessings to them day and night."

ANAP deputy Muhsin Koçyiğit posed the question whether this law is also covering 20 thousand temporary village guards and proposed to give license to carry a small gun to the temporary village guards especially in city centers, in order to ensure their security. The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs Mehdi Eker responded to this proposal and informed that the law covers temporary village guards and the necessary amendment was made in the gun license regulations. However, Muharrem Doğan of ANAP stated that the current law is deficient where the village guards, just as the SSK holders, or the civil servants entitled to law no: 657 should have health cards. Doğan further criticized by stating that the law brings nothing to 22 thousand voluntary village guards and the rights of the 57,860 temporary village guards are not fully covered. He also expressed that "temporary village guard, by its name, is dishonoring" and proposed that if the temporary village guard system is going to continue, from now on these people should be named as 'armed village guard' and the ones having at minimum a high school diploma should be employed for this duty. Another deputy of ANAP, İbrahim Özdoğan expressed that "the temporary village guards who died in the nation's defense should be officially granted 'martyr' status" and the 'veteran' status for the wounded ones. Even though the deputies of DYP and ANAP race with each other in expressing that the social rights and the status that were granted to the village guards are not satisfactory, in general both DYP and ANAP

deputies were satisfied with the steps of the ruling party on the "reform" of the village guard system. Moreover, this state of being satisfied was not limited to some deputies; the AK Party's position in the region broadened in its favor.

On January 23rd, 2008, in order to draw the attention on the damages arising from the village guard system, Hasip Kaplan of Democratic Society Party (DTP) took on the floor. Kaplan informed that "at the former state of emergency region, apart from the weapons given to some of the village guards, an armament in a way called voluntary village guards is provided by taking the numbers and issuing a permission document" and inquired on what legal grounds this was allowed. Kaplan further stated that the news of the employment of 10 thousand young village guards took place in the press and inquired about the quality of the guns that will be given to them. The Minister of Internal Affairs Beşir Atalay replied that there is no new decision regarding the village guards and the guns they will be carrying, however they are in the process of preparing a new regulation that will cover all the aspects regarding the village guards. Atalay further added that this regulation is under the approval of Cabinet. On February 26, 2008, CHP deputy Ferit Mevlüt Aslanoğlu, while referring to the delay of the said regulation, reminded that it has been eight months since the law regarding the village guards passed. In the session of March 27, 2008, AK Party deputy Ünal Kacır informed that with the Social Insurance and General Health Insurance Draft Law, they included the village guards who receive monthly income according to Village Law numbered 442 in the general health insurance system.

f. Last turning point for the village guard system: "Bilge village massacre" and "Hançer Timi" ("Dagger Team") (2009-2012)

> *The expectation of the people of the region and the democratic public opinion is the abolition of this system which explicitly threatens the social life and the basic human rights, right to life being the foremost.*
>
> MPs of DTP

Approximately a year after, the question of village guard system became an agenda of the National Assembly again due to an incident widely known as "Bilge village massacre" that justifies all the concerns that was vocalized

repeatedly regarding the issue. In the session of May 7, 2009, Ahmet Türk of DTP and 20 other deputies proposed a motion for a parliamentary investigation of the problems originating from the village guard system and the determination of the precautions. The justification of the motion as follows:

> "The massacre that took place on May 4, 2009, at Bilge village of Mazıdağı District, Mardin that resulted in the death of 44 citizens makes it absolutely necessary to revise one more time the village guard system that is in practice in East and Southeast Anatolia Region and almost became a criminal organization... Even though the state of emergency is abolished in 2002, the village guard system still continues. According to the declaration of the Minister of Internal Affairs on March 20, 2009; in 22 cities there are 47 thousand 819 Temporary Village Guards and in 32 cities 24 thousand 88 Voluntary Village Guards, in total 71 thousand 901 village guards are on duty... According to the statistics of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as of April 2003, legal action was taken against 2 thousand 376 village guards. 264 of the voluntary village guards were convicted of petty offenses such as; 'murder', 'attempted murder', 'resistance against the law numbered 6136', 'using firearms in residential area' and 'forest smuggling'. According to the most recent statistics of the Minister of Internal Affairs; the number of the village guards who were dismissed after a legal action due to the detection of their involvement in various crimes in the recent years is 975. This scene alone itself is a concrete example of how the village guard system has become a criminal organization on its own. Some of the types of crime that village guards were involved and submitted to the jurisdiction as follows: 'Extortion, robbery, killing, wounding, kidnapping, using explosives, burglary, forcing to sign cheques and vouchers, setting fire to agricultural yield and field, fraud, bribery, embezzlement, child abduction, taking hostage, threatening, rape, woman trafficking, drug-gun-ammunition-livestock-historical artifact smuggling and crimes against environment.' The village guard system that became a 'petty offenses organization' is turning into a social and psychological destruction, disaster and a phenomenon. Such that, thousands of people were forced to abandon their home just because they did not accept the village guard system. In time, this system created a gap between the tribes who accepted to be a village guard and the ones who refused, and created the tribal term 'pro-statist and enemy of the state'... The village guard system that seriously threatens the social peace and whose legitimacy is disputable preserves its place in the conscience and ethical values of the society as an unforgivable practice. As a matter of fact, due to the threatening presence of the village guard system, people's chance of returning back to their homes and villages cannot occur. The village guards, with the power

> of the state on their back, have either occupied the homes or the fields of the forcefully displaced people or rendered them unusable-uncultivable. Because the ones that want to return back to their villages are forced to join the village guard system. The expectation of the people of the region and the democratic public opinion is the abolition of this system which explicitly threatens the social life and the basic human rights, right to life being the foremost."

In the session of February 24, 2010 Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) deputy M. Nuri Yaman and 19 deputies presented a motion for a parliamentary investigation of the existence of the paramilitary group 'Hançer Timi' in the East and Southeast Anatolia Region and the determination of the precautions regarding this issue. The justification of the motion as follows:

> "In the recent years, the task force groups called 'Hançer Timi' in the East and Southeast Anatolia Region are claimed to exist where these task forces allegedly committed numerous crimes such as; setting fire to villages, threatening the citizen, murder, raking the citizens, kidnapping...It is alleged that this task force of 8-10 people formed up of young village guards from various villages and confessors, is roaming the region in groups of 3 or 4, wearing the clothes of members of the organization and getting in action especially at night. Among the allegations is that this group called 'Hançer Timi' is visiting the villages at various time of the day in private cars and changes license plates, going into houses and collecting information on the villagers and later going to military barricades and staying there. Again according to the allegations, the responsibility of each team is given to Gendarme Specialist Sergeants. Moreover, it is claimed by the citizens living in the region that armed, plainclothes men are roaming around, visiting the villages located in the region during night and threatening the villagers. Even though there are many military guard posts and stations in the region, these people wander freely."

In the session of July 16, 2010, the information given in the motion proposed by Osman Özçelik of BDP and 19 deputies for the conduct of a parliamentary inquiry on the village guard system are supporting the previous' proposed motions:

> "According to the data provided by the Human Rights Association, the crimes that village guards were involved in between 1990 and September 2009 as follows: Burning of Villages: 38, Evacuation of Villages: 14,

> Harassment and Rape: 12, Abduction: 22, Armed Attack: 294, Wounded as a Result of Armed Attack; 189, Deaths as a Result of Armed Attack; 181+4, Disappearances: 2, Executions: 50, Extortion: 70, Torture and ill-treatment: 454, Arrest: 59, Suicide: 9, Burning Forests: 17. In a report of Turkish General Staff prepared in 2004, the crimes in which village guards were involved are enumerated such as: 'Helping and harboring the criminal organization, extortion, robbery, killing, wounding, collision with law enforcers, collective attack against law enforcers, attack against residence and vehicles, kidnapping, using explosives, deliberately setting fires to homes and fields, burglary from, home, office, bank and car, pick pocketing, attack against pipelines, forcing to sign cheques and vouchers, illegal collection of cheques and vouchers, setting fire to state-owned buildings, vehicles and facilities, setting fire to forests, setting fire to agricultural yield and field, fraud, misconduct of security, selling, keeping and buying properties of crime, causing damage in properties, crimes of information, resistance against law enforcers, pounding and attacking, resistance against government orders, bribery, embezzlement, extortion, impropriety, defalcation, kidnapping girls, women and men, kidnapping children, taking hostages, threatening, defamation, ill-treatment against family members, acts of obscenity, rape, attempts of rape, fostering prostitution, woman trafficking, gambling and fostering gambling, violating inviolability of residence, using firearms in residential area, drug smuggling, arms and ammunition smuggling, smuggling of beverages, tobacco and customs properties, illegal livestock trade, human trafficking and crimes against environment.' It is a known fact that the village guards have their own detention room, prison and police station in the region and the cars of the village guards do not have a license plate on them... it is observed that the village guard system has become a crime mechanism."

None of these motions were accepted and the most acclaimed criticism regarding the village guard system was brought back to the agenda. In the session of February 3rd, 2011 the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) group proposed a motion for a parliamentary inquiry in order to "investigate the problems of the temporary village guards and to take the precautions for the healthier functioning of the system" in which they claimed that the many legal rights of the village guards are subject to arbitrary regulations. AK Party deputy Ali Öztürk replied that as of January 2011, a total of 45,536 temporary village guards are on duty in 22 cities; as long as their duty continues, approximately 712.047 TL monthly income is paid to them as of July 1st-August 31st, 2010; according to the first clause of Supplementary Article 16 of the Village Law numbered 442,

the temporary village guards who turn 55 are discharged, the ones who turn 55 and served for 15 years will receive 309.77 TL; the ones who turn 55 and served more than 15 years will receive 495 TL; the ones who served for 10 or more years when the law was adopted will receive 309 TL monthly pension; the ones leaving their duty before completing the duration only receives compensation; the ones who died or discharged due to health or administrative reasons receives a compensation of 1,239 TL for each employment year; the ones quitting their duty with their own will receives a compensation of 1,239 TL for each employment year regardless of years of employment; the village guards joining operations receive a supplementary compensation; according to the Temporary Village Guard By-Laws Article 22 they receive clothing allowance; on covering the health and treatment expenses of the temporary village guards, examination and treatment expenses of the temporary village guards and their dependents who are not covered by any social security institution, will be issued a Green Card while, at the same time, exempting them from the requirements set forth by the Law on Issuance of Green Cards for the Citizens who are Incapable to Pay for Health Care Services No. 3816.; according to the Social Insurance and General Health Insurance Law no: 5510 Article 60, temporary village guards are considered as individuals who are not deemed to be holders of general health insurance; the spouses and children, if none mother and father, if none either the siblings of the temporary village guards who died on duty receives 929 TL without any cut; upon physical injury, disablement or death during term of duty of village guards and temporary village guards, a compensation is paid according to the Law numbered 2330 on Compensation in Cash and Pension; in case of a death or a serious injury preventing from working of a public servant, if his spouse exists, if not one of his children; if not one of his siblings are employed in accordance with the Anti-Terror Law No.3713 Additional Article 1. Öztürk further expressed that:

> "It is also our wish that temporary village guards have better opportunities. However, as we are now in the election process, considering the working process and finalization of their works, I believe it is not right to bring these kind of important issues that were never to brought to the agenda before."

In the session of February 15, 2011, the inquiry submitted by MHP deputy

Yılmaz Tankut and directed to the Minister of Internal Affairs Beşir Atalay, mentions that the pensions and the retirement pensions of the village guards who are "approximately 40,000 people" are inadequate and they can only benefit from the healthcare aids with green card and requested the pensions of village guards to be redefined according to today's conditions. Same demand was also vocalized by Hasip Kaplan of BDP on March 8, 2011. Kaplan stated that the number of village guards is 82 thousand and their income is 595 TL and complained that the social security rights of the village guards are not given. Even though the government authorities did not provide an accurate number of the village guards, they made a few regulations regarding their social rights.

By the Retirement Fund Law that passed in the session of December 22, 2011, as Ekrem Çelebi of AK Party expressed; "on the determination of the procedures and principles of the village guards' access to the health benefits Social Security Institution, SGK" was authorized. In the session of March 27, 2012, AK Party deputy Fatoş Gürkan announced the good news that the head of the department, a part of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, concerned with the issues regarding the relatives of the martyrs and veterans, contributed in the preparation of an article regarding the rights of the martyrs. The inclusion of this article in the Anti-Terror Law has given the chance to "the temporary village guards benefitting from the housing loan free of interest", and the village guards will not be paying contribution while obtaining any kind of medical equipment that they require. The good news given by Gürkan was enacted during the session of July 3, 2012 and provided the employment of two people in public sector out of the spouse, children, mother, father or siblings of the martyred temporary of voluntary village guard.

On November 7, 2012, Enver Erdem of MHP expressed that the Metropolitan Municipality Law is a regulation "that will weaken Turkey's hand and makes us invulnerable against terror in these times when the country has such a problem related to terror" since in the cities of the "region", which were granted municipality status, the gendarmerie organization will not be able to perform duties. Erdem also added that the next move of the ruling party will be the abolition of the village guard system. He further stated that the authority of the metropolitan municipality to establish city policemen will result in creating "self-defense forces" by employing the "terrorists that will come down the mountain". Erdem also criticized the government by saying "it is the Oslo

process who is asking you to abolish the village guard system". On November 8, 2012, MHP deputy Lütfü Türkkan interpreted this structuralization on local government level as:

> "If the municipalities located in the East and Southeast Anatolia Region gets under control of ethnically based political parties, this situation will cause problems for the village guards in the region in benefiting from even basic public services."

It seems that Sadir Durmaz of MHP who took on the floor on November 11, 2012 carries similar concerns:

> "... with this law, the pro-statist villages, tribes, shopkeepers and village guards will be left alone at the mercy of a governor who is pursuing an ethnically based politics? How will you protect them?"

Another deputy of MHP Hasan Hüseyin Türkoğlu expressed that this law will hinder the services reach to the village guards' villages, cause the roads to be closed and will create grounds for the terrorist raids. These statements leave the door open to creating a tacit bond between the village guards and MHP as well as the terrorists and BDP, while implying that until today the village guards living in the "region" were privileged and as for the people who are not village guards, the services for them were reluctantly provided.

g. Evaluation

During approximately thirty years following its implementation in 1985, the village guard system that was tenaciously carried on with the cooperation of governments and the armed forces, is interpreted as a "counter terrorism" tool and a solution to the employment problem of the region. Even the political parties in opposition which were supporting its abolition realized that they can only work on its reform when they came to power. This situation is not only due to the complexity of a war against an organization who knows the region better than the state and whose guerrilla structure creates a more advantageous position than a military army, but also because of the fact that political parties cannot easily discard the relations in the region between the tribes and the

village guards and they need to watch out the demands of the army as well. In the end, the village guard system, from time to time became the most important ground for the administrative, military and even economic structure of the region. Even though the abolition of the village guard system become a hot topic due to the "reluctance" of the villagers in becoming a village guard when not even two years passed after its implementation, due to the reasons such as the disarmament attempts of the village guards, their involvement in the "serious crimes" such as gun and drug smuggling, their crime rates, their oppression on the people of the region, on the one hand rendering PKK nonfunctional by putting it on the target and on the other hand the persecution of the village guards on the grounds of aiding PKK, the village guard system remained to be a part of the heroic policies as long as the "counter terrorism" continued and especially intensified at the beginning of the 1990s. On the other hand, it is also possible to say that when the reform of the village guard system instead of its abolition was on the agenda, a quiet, "clean and damageless" way to get rid of the village guards was sought. The notion of reform is generally understood as a response to the demands of the village guards, especially regarding the granting and improving the personal rights. The fact that the village guards do not have a job that they can return back to as they were once engaged in farming and animal breeding, and the fear that they may be subject to the reactions of the people of the region due to the crimes they committed makes it impossible to get rid of the village guards quietly. For this reason, the precautions such as the retirement possibility of the "veterans" and the ones who are too old or invalid to continue to work as a village guard without paying any premium, compensation payments to the relatives of the "martyr" and appointing them as civil servants, re-employment of the others in the agriculture, animal breeding and security sectors and providing free, healthcare service to all of them could be interpreted as these steps that were taken in order to "melt away" the village guards. In this respect, while the opposition parties insist on the disarmament of the village guards or complete and clear the abolition of the village guard system by employing them in different areas, the ruling parties took into consideration the number and diversity of the village guards and their parties' and village guards' complex relations with the state and the army and tried to remove the subject off the agenda while following a more subtle and quiet method.

The parties that own a group at the National Assembly - while accepting the fact that all the deputies belonging to the same party do not necessarily share the same opinion - could be classified under two groups regarding their approach to the question of village guard system. On one side, there are the conservative parties that are generally the ruling party, and majority of their deputies are in favor of right-wing policies. These parties brought the guard system and accept the village guard system as a continuity of a historical regulation and see its historical attribute as a justification, define the benefit of the system as a deterrence, claim that the rate of abuse of power is not significant and a legal action is taken against the guards who do this, believe that village guards should be granted with martyrdom status and should have the same social rights and insurances as the civil servants and accept the tribal system in the region as a beneficial social structure for the presence of the parties and the state in the region.

On the other side is the opposition parties mainly composed of deputies adopting left-wing policies. Since the first proposal regarding the village guard system was presented these parties incessantly drew the attention to the criteria of the selection of the village guards and the tribal structure of the region, to the consolidation of certain dominant elements in this structure and leaving the other ones under crossfire, objecting to the regulation of arming the people in which the voluntary became compulsory and temporary became permanent, expressing their concern regarding the crimes committed by these guns, arguing that arming the people cannot be used as an anti-terror method while stating that this is against the Constitution as a social, state of law, expressing that this method means employing informal worker, that the responsibility of maintaining the security is given to the citizens, that these kind of structures give birth to the authoritarian and military relations which nourish the tendency to form a gang in the state and create grounds for the violation of basic human rights and anti-democratic developments. It is evident that the sides separated during the discussions on the village guard system shares a parallelism on the split of opinion regarding democracy and human rights, relation between the state and citizens, relation between the army and politics and Kurdish issue. Another point which is evident is the social, political and economic destruction and losses which was created by the village guard system. What is confusing and unclear is the reasons for insisting on the village guard system.

ANNEX 1: The bills of law that were discussed, accepted and passed as a law during the session of May 27, 2007

The second clause of the 74th article of The Village Law numbered 442 dated 18/03/1924 was amended as follows, in the fourth clause the sentence "or receiving monthly income abiding by the provisions of this law" will be added after the phrase "who resigns" and at the end of the same clause the phrase, "In case of the monthly income of the spouse upon the death of the temporary village guards, the aforementioned beneficiaries shall receive the same examination and treatment allowances." Will be added and at the end of the article following sentences were added.

If there are serious indications of circumstances requiring state of emergency or acts of violence in villages or their surrounding, or if attacks on villagers' life and property increases for any reason, then "Temporary Village Guards" may be employed in provinces to be determined by the Cabinet, upon the proposal of the Governor and the approval of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The number of temporary village guards appointed in this manner shall not exceed 40,000 persons. The Cabinet has the authority to increase this amount up to 50%.

In case of the removal of the conditions that renders the employment a requisite or in case of administrative obligations, provided that the same procedure is applied, the employment of temporary village guards may terminate. For the duration of the employment of the temporary village guards, a monthly income equals to an amount calculated by multiplying the 11,500 index number with the monthly income coefficient for the public employee will be paid. This income will be paid in cash without any tax or cut.

Among temporary village guards, head of the village guards will be selected while not exceeding the ten percent of the total amount of temporary village guards, an additional ten percent of the pension paid to the temporary village guards will be paid to the head of the village guards. Except than the temporary village guards who resign by their own will before the end of the month and the guards dismissed as a result of a disciplinary regulation, upon death or dismissal of the village guards the pension paid in cash in advance, the amount corresponding to the rest of the days shall not be reclaimed.

The quarter's allowances of the temporary village guards joining an

operation with the security forces will be provided from the budget of the unit joining the operation together. During the natural disaster and other extraordinary times, the temporary village guards showing success or great help may receive an award once in a year with the proposal of the governor and approval of the Minister of Internal Affairs that is equal to the twice the pension. The number of temporary village guards receiving an award in this respect in a fiscal year shall not exceed the one percent of the number of the temporary village guards employed in that city. The temporary village guards joining an operation with the security forces will receive a supplementary compensation each month that is equal to an amount calculated by multiplying the 400 index number with the monthly income coefficient for the public employee and this amount is exempted from tax and cut.

The persons employed as temporary village guard are not considered as short and long term insurance branches for the regulations of Social Security and General Health Insurance Law no.5510 dated 31/05/2006. According to this article, the expenses for the temporary village guards will be covered from the budget of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the payments will be made by the city governorships.

Following additional articles are amended to the Law number. 442.

ADDITIONAL ARTICLE 16- The employment of the temporary village guards who turn 55 will be terminated. The ones whose employment was terminated, whose years of employment is fifteen years or more and still alive will receive a monthly payment provided by the Social Insurance Institution, of an amount calculated by multiplying the 5,000 index number with the monthly income coefficient for the public employee. For each year exceeding fifteen years, 200 index number will be added to the 5000, and the additions done in this respect shall not exceed 2000 index number. In the calculation of 200 index number that will be added to the monthly index, the monthly fractions are considered a complete month. For each month of a year fraction is calculated by adding the sum found by multiplying the 200 index number with the monthly income coefficient for the public employee to the 1 in 12 of the monthly income. The widowed spouse of the deceased ones that receive a pension according to the provisions of the first clause and upon the death of the ones who are

not 55 yet but whose years of employment fifteen or more years during their employment, the widowed spouses will get an income of seventy five percent of the monthly income calculated according to the first clause. The widowed spouse that receives monthly income from any social insurance institution will receive the half of the amount calculated according to this clause. Upon marriage, the pension of the widowed spouse will be cancelled and will not be reacquired if they become widowed again, except the reason for being widowed is death. The temporary village guards or their widowed spouses will not get a pension if they are convicted of terrorist crimes. If they were receiving the monthly income prior to the conviction, the income will be terminated.

The invalid temporary village guards themselves, if they are deceased then his widow and orphans receive invalid, widow or orphan pension according to the provisions of Law on Compensation in Cash and Pension number. 2330 dated 3/11/1980, they will not receive an additional pension based on the provisions of this article and the pensions that were previously given according to the provisions of this article will be terminated.

ADDITIONAL ARTICLE Temporary village guards who are between 17-55 and have a employment year less than fifteen years; or temporary village guards who did not turn 55; the ones who were discarded due to health and administrative reasons and the deceased ones (except the ones who did not turn 55 but whose years of employment is fifteen or more years and the ones who died while being employed) will receive a compensation of the amount calculated by multiplying the 20,000 index number with the monthly income coefficient for the public employee. Temporary village guards who leave their duty on their will before turning 55, regardless of their years of employment will receive a compensation of the amount calculated by multiplying the 20,000 index number with the monthly income coefficient for the public employee and years of employment. While calculating the compensation, less than one year of employment is accepted as one year. For the employment durations that exceeds one full year; monthly fraction will be accepted as complete month and the payment will be made according to this duration. The compensation granted for the deceased temporary village guards will be paid to heir-at-laws. There shall be no tax or cut taken from the compensation amount. The ones granted a pension in accordance with the Additional Article 16, or temporary village guards who are discarded due to disciplinary regulations will not receive compensation

based on this article. Upon death of temporary village guards during duty, spouse and children, if none mother and father, if none siblings will receive an amount calculated by multiplying the 15,000 index number with the monthly income coefficient for the public employee as death allowance, this payment is exempt from tax and cuts. The invalid temporary village guards themselves, if they are deceased then his widow and orphans receive invalid, widow or orphan pension according to the provisions of Law on Compensation in Cash and Pension number. 2330 dated 3/11/1980, they will not receive an additional compensation based on the provisions of this article and the amount of the compensation that was previously given to them according to the provisions of this article will be deducted from the compensation in cash which they will be given pursuant to Law number. 2330. The payments included by Additional Article 16 and this article will be done by the Social Insurance Institution and will be covered from the Treasury in the following two months.

ADDITIONAL ARTICLE 18- Regulations regarding the temporary village guards' and the head of the village guards'; employment, criteria of the employment, duties, disciplinary punishments, the conditions requiring dismissal, disciplinary superiors, clothing items and type and the time that these will be given, training and inspection methods and principals, records and absences, the health conditions they are required to have during first application to the duty, rights to work in another job and the other issues covered up in the Law will be prepared by the Ministry of Internal Affairs upon the proposal of the Ministry of National Defense and Ministry of Finance and will be adapted by a regulation issued by the Cabinet in six months following the issue date of this article.

The following term "0.5% of the" expressed in The Anti-Terror Law No.3713 dated 12/04/1991 Additional Article 1 (A) clause first paragraph, is changed to "0.7% of the", and the following sentence "[The public servant who are deceased or disabled to the degree that they cannot work] and private soldiers and lance corporals and, if exist, their spouses, if none, one of their children, if none, one of their siblings" expressed in the same clause's (a) sub-clause and (a) sub-clause of the (B) clause is changed to ", private soldiers and lance corporals and temporary [and voluntary] village guards, depending on the priority, one of the spouse, children or siblings".[11]

The following sentence "Additional Articles 17 and 18 of Village Law No. 442 dated 18/3/1924; compensation and benefit payments" was added after the sentence "Law No. 168" to the Article 15 (b) sub-clause of the Social Security Institution Law Number 5502 dated 16/05/2006. On the date when this Law enters into force;

a) The employment of the temporary village guards who are already on duty cannot be terminated on the grounds of the specified number limit appearing in the Village Law numbered 442, dated 18/03/1924, Article 74, that is defined different in this Law.

b) The temporary village guards that are on duty and the termination of their employment due to the reason that they turn 55 and the ones having years of employment as temporary village guards between 10 and 15 years will be receiving a pension calculated by taking the 5000 index number as a base and the provisions of the Village Law numbered 442, Additional Article 16. Temporary village guards who turned fifty five, and whose years of employment are less than ten years, upon their wish, will serve for ten years and get retired and same provisions will apply to them. For the ones who turned fifty five, and whose year of employment is less than ten years and do not want to be employed, the provisions of the Village Law numbered 442, Additional Article 17 apply.

c) Temporary village guards who did not turn 55, upon their wish, will continue to be employed until they turn 55. For the ones who did not turn 55, have less than 10 years on the day they turned 55 when this Law entered into force, may continue to be employed until completing 10 years of employment and for them the provisions of the (b) sub-clause apply. The ones who receive a pension based on the Village Law numbered. 442 Additional Article 16 due to being eligible for the conditions stated in (b) and (c) sub-clauses will not receive a compensation based on the Village Law Additional Article 17.

Implementation of the provisions stated above, according to the Article 74 of the Village Law numbered, 442, that is different than the one stated in this Law, the removal of the conditions that renders the employment a requisite or in case of administrative obligations, provided that the same procedure is applied, does not constitute an impediment for the termination of employment of temporary village guards.

2. Village guard system at press: 1987-2013

In this part of the report, the approach to the village guard system is chronologically analyzed by examining the news that took place in several mainstream and alternative, daily and weekly newspapers and journals. From time to time, in order to maintain the integrity of the issue, the chronological flow of the text is not preserved. In this respect, how the question of village guard system appeared on different press organs will be analyzed by examining the news that was published around same date. Among the analyzed newspapers and journals, a balance between the mainstream press organs and the ones that mainly publish news on Kurdish issue was tried to be maintained. However, the fact that the latter ones included the issue more frequently created an inevitable unbalance to the disadvantage of the mainstream press organs. In order to avoid repetition, only the news on certain issues that are approached in the most striking way among the analyzed news of the journals and newspapers were presented here. Apart from the exceptions, no commentary was made on the news and the general evaluation takes place at the end of this chapter.

In addition to this, sub-sections were made out of by carrying the striking issues appearing in some news to the title. The sub-sections contain the agendas that are heavily debated during certain periods. These titles, rather than being a thematic arrangement, are put without hindering the chronological flow of the text in order to emphasize the critical developments that from time to time bring forth the controversial topics that were prevalently discussed since the launching of the village guard system.

a. "An option for the citizens": First years of the village guard system

A news appearing in the weekly newspaper Yeni Gündem, issue of February, 15-21, 1987 includes an important analysis not only on the massacre but also on the social destruction that will continue for years. The news is about raids of PKK on the houses of the village guards Gündikkörti,[12] Midyat district of Mardin that resulted with the deaths of ten people, including four children. The incident is told by expressing that the blood feud that was thought to be over for a while is incited by the war where the village guards and the state are on one side and the ones who are not village guards and the PKK on the other side.

A member of the family that was killed during the raid, identifying himself as "pro-PKK" and stating that he used to be a "man of the bloody ones" said that:

> "I know that if there were no guns of the state in this village, then there would not be any oppression. But I do not regret. I will again support the state. Commander promised us, 20 inhabitants of this village will be given guns. Everybody will fight for the sake of the state."

The news prepared by Ümit Sezgin and Mehmet Şenol finished with these questions:

> "Now, in this area, did the state gain the support of the public against the PKK? Does it "prevail its struggle over the grassroots" and "become a mass movement" with its supporters who are the "adverse villagers" getting close to it in order to be safe over against the possible attacks?"

The fact that these questions cannot be answered by "yes" makes it harder to understand how the village guard system existed for nearly thirty years.

In the article written by Hasan Cemal in Cumhuriyet newspaper on February, 24, 1987, Cemal interpreted a raid of PKK in Taşdelen village, Uludere district of Hakkari, and stated that these last five raids were all against the village guards' families and these attacks cannot be understood as the signs that prove that the village guard system is appropriate and dissuasive.

In the following day's issue, the criticisms of SHP President Erdal İnönü, DSP President Rahşan Ecevit and DYP President Hüsamettin Cindoruk on the village guard system and the government took place. Yeni Gündem's issue dating March, 1-7, 1987 published a news starting with the following criticism of Hüsamettin Cindoruk:

> "The fight between the state and the bandits has turned into the genocide of some citizens. This is a genocide...The state's wrongdoing kills innocent people."

In the news where similar criticisms were reminded to be made since 1985, the year when the village guard program was launched, it indicated that the program was first enacted under the name of "Izale-i Şekavet" (Riddance of Banditry) by the first National Assembly –who wanted to ask for the citizens' help

against the bandits who wanted to take advantage of the post-war environment where there were not enough security forces available- in 1923 but then revoked in 1962 for being unconstitutional and the excuse that the services of village guards were not needed anymore. Even after 23 years it is still questioned why the village guards are needed even though the police and gendarmerie forces as well as their power along with the martial law forces in the region have been reinforced. The news also reports that there have been complaints stating that the village guards, who were employed due to their knowledge about the region for showing the way to the military men and joining the operations, were also assigned with other duties such as being informers and used their authority and weapons in their personal businesses and disputes.

It is stated that during the process of guard employment some illegal actions were taken and tribe leaders, village headmen, and gendarmerie determine who will become guards and the villages from which the guards will be picked. The statement of Siirt deputy from DYP Abdürrezzak Ceylan was also present in the news;

> "A terrorist killed by the village guard brings forth a blood feud between the family of the terrorist and the family of the village guard. However, a bandit killed by security forces does not cause such a result."

In the news, it is stated that the PKK first sends messages to villages not to become guards and threatens them, then starts raiding homes and thus causing an increase in civilian casualties. The news also includes the statements of the Minister of Internal Affairs Yıldırım Akbulut who interprets the fact that village guards became the targets of the PKK as the success of the village guard system as a deterrent action. In the news it is also stated that it is dubious whether deterrence is taking place or not, since not a single perpetrator was caught after 5 raids resulting in the death of 35 people. In fact the summary of the news is in the question of Cindoruk:

> "If citizens can protect themselves, why is the state necessary?"

In his column of Milliyet newspaper dated June 28, 1987, Mehmet Ali Kışlalı argued that the opposition parties and some intellectuals proposing the abolition of the village guard system "do not include sufficient justification for

their proposal, therefore it is impossible to learn and discuss their opinions". Kışlalı also added that for many years, the state left the Southeast to its fate and the villages have been subject to the authority of the separatist gangs. Kışlalı further defended the system by saying:

> "Now, it is the first time in the history of Southeast, the state is represented by village guards in many villages. The citizens of the village, the ones who wish, have an option for the first time. Should they choose the village guards who represent the state power? Or, should they choose the separatist groups as before? ...The state does not force any citizens in the villages. Citizens move by their own will."

It can be said that Kışlalı, who sees leaving the villagers between two fires as the solution and delegating the armed civilians for the representation of the state, to put it mildly, does not adequately follow the criticisms against the village guard system. As a matter of fact, the news of Yurdakul Fincancı in Milliyet newspaper on July 20, 1987, it is informed that some of the village guards stated that they became village guards under pressure and some of the peasants who do not own a land saw the village guard system as a mean of livelihood. The news continues as:

> "Village guard system especially reinforces the separatism between families having deep-rooted hostility as a result of blood feud or similar reasons. One of the families of this kind becomes superior to other by becoming village guard and taking guns and equipments of the state. In order to maintain the balance between them, the other family may become the voluntary informant of the PKK. The effectiveness of the village guard system seems to be nothing other than holding PKK units in the mountains or rural areas. However, because the village guard system depends on the idea that villagers are absolutely in opposition to the PKK, the effectiveness of the village guard system depends on whether this presupposition is true or not."

This last deduction does not allow Kışlalı to be content with the representation of the state by the village guards in the region. Moreover, as it can be predicted, the fact that the village guard system is not a regulation in which the "citizens move by their own will" can be understood by a news appearing in Nokta journal on November 1, 1987. The news reports that the

individuals who had been forced to become village guards in 56 villages located in Lice district of Diyarbakır, ran away from their villages.

It is also reported by the statements of the eye-witnesses that Lice Gendarme Station Commander Lieutenant Murat Odabaş spread the news "tell the villagers, they should become village guards voluntarily, or else we will do it by force", visited the villages, gathered the villagers in the village square where he noted down them as village guards and beat up the ones refusing to become a village guard.

b. "Registration" and "workers of the factories without chimneys": Broadening of the village guard system

On August 23, 1987, Celal Başlangıç in his column at Cumhuriyet newspaper informed that in Uludere district of Hakkari, two tribes, Goyans and Jirkis engaged in an armed conflict with each other while using guns of the village guards and "permitted" guns. Goyans cut the road of Jirkis and Jirkis cut the water of Goyans. Başlangıç also mentions the perception that Jirkis are pro-statist and Goyans are pro-PKK and states that the conflict between two tribes with the weapons distributed and licensed by the State is in fact a warning for the perils that may result from the village guard system. In his article on August 25, 1987, Başlangıç informs that during the PKK raids in Milan Pınarcık, some of the targeted village guards did not even use all of their ammos and not even a single militant was killed and he further questions how and why these people who are not adept at using a gun have become village guards. Moreover, Başlangıç informed that after the Milan raid, the state suspected that the village guards were in collaboration with the PKK just because they survived and arrested them. He further criticized that the village guards are subject to such actions while living under the fear of the PKK.

On January 10, 1988, Cumhuriyet newspaper included SHP Diyarbakır deputy Mehmet Kahraman's critique regarding the gun "licensing" practices in the region. Kahraman reported that the village guard system and the target of the barrel pointed at the village guards are broadened, the oppression of the armed, rich, head of the tribes on the unarmed, poor people increased and gun smuggling was endorsed. According to the news of Ahmet Kahraman in Milliyet newspaper on March 10, 1988, the ones showing the most interest in the village

guard system are "ex-convicts, blood feuders, the elders and the head of the tribes". Kahraman further reports that one of the head of the village guards, along with the relatives of another "wanted" village guard beat their personal enemies with a rifle butt in the middle of the village market. In the news of Mehmet Faraç, appearing in Milliyet newspaper on May, 17, 1989, it is reported that five village headmen of Birecik district, Şanlıurfa submitted a letter to the Governor's office on the grounds that the village guards are causing "hostility and uneasiness between the tribes." The fact that Şanlıurfa was not under state of emergency or "no anarchist event was taking place" as villagers said, poses the question on what actually is the duty of the village guards in this city.

Cumhuriyet newspaper of May 31, 1988, included the briefing given by the state of emergency regional Governor Hayri Kozakçıoğlu to the journalists and their managers:

> "Today, the village guard system is based on voluntariness and is desired more and more. Village guard system has a financial aspect in addition to safeguarding of the region. There is an employment problem in the region. We give 125 liras net monthly salary to our village guard. When we compare it with the minimum wage; it can be seen, this is much better than working in a factory. Today, without making any investment, we have founded the factories without chimneys."

Hayri Kozakçıoğlu's opinion on accepting village guard system as a solution to the employment system is valued. His statements expressed during a conversation with the journalists again included in Cumhuriyet newspaper after two years on June 12, 1990. Kozakçıoğlu informed that at the moment 10,5 billion Turkish liras are monthly paid for 21 thousand 480 village guards, there are still five thousand applications waiting to be considered, however they are not planning to increase the number of village guards. Kozakçıoğlu stated that:

> "Now, village guards get more money than an unqualified press reporter. If you add food, clothing allowances, guns, bullets and hand-grenade to this amount, it is a huge expense. Village guards of today are in a good condition, some of them even have second wives. The amount of money they got creates a financial movement. Some say "instead of giving them 150 billion liras in a year, establish a factory." The issue is not 20 thousand village guards. If I want I can bring 20 thousand soldiers instead of them,

> and support them better with that amount of money. However, it is necessary to sustain the livelihood of people living in the region."

This paternalist attitude of Kozakçıoğlu towards the workers working at these factories without chimney reinforces the argument that the true agenda of the village guard system is not security.

c. Consolidation of the "vicious circle of village guard system" "between two fires": Permanent temporariness, coerced voluntariness

However, the disarmament of the village guards cannot be prevented as this fact will be observed more frequently in the following years. The story of the disarmament of the village guards is depicted in a Cudi report prepared by the 2000'e Doğru Journal on August 6, 1989:

> "The last village guards from Beytüşşebap Mahmurans (A tribe in the Beytüşşebap district of Şırnak city) also apply to the authorities in order to return their guns. However, the commander does not accept this by no means. He says: 'This motherland is entrusted to you. Otherwise, who will protect this region.' But, villagers are pertinacious: 'I swear my commander; this motherland is entrusted to you. You are already a soldier. We are just ordinary peasants. Because of that, take our guns back. Or else, our life is over."

According to the news, the fact that even the village guards of the well-known Jirki tribe in Beytüşşebap region wanted to return back their guns on the grounds that they lack security proves that the villagers are estranged from the state. It is also reported that the PKK militants in military uniforms collected these guns that were not taken back by the military from these villagers who are more than willing to get rid of them. The news entitled "The weapon source of the guerrilla" appearing in the same journal on April 8, 1990, includes a list of guns of the PKK obtained from the village guards and military men. According to the news, the guns of the village guards that the state forcibly had given are acquired by the PKK either by force or easily by wearing military uniforms. The village guards who lost their guns to the PKK are punished on the grounds of "not resisting" and some village guards return their guns to the military station commanders by threatening that they will give their arms to the PKK.

Bülent Ecevit reports his observations on Southeast which consists of field interviews done in the region, in Nokta journal on October 15, 1989:

> "Somehow, an effective and sufficient security system has not been established yet. In many places, inexperienced village guards or young soldiers who have been trained only for a few months are confronted by terrorists who had guerilla training for years. Also clothing is strange... It is not clear who is soldier, who is task force, who is police and who is terrorist. Everybody masquerade as each other. Besides, when people bump into an unshaved young individual wearing shabby clothes and guns at the mountain top, they cannot also be easily sure whether he is an ally or an enemy."

Ecevit most probably knew that the ally-enemy distinction cannot only be made by clothing since he finished his article by expressing the despair and weariness that the public feels in front of this situation in the following sentence:

> "The most painful of all, is the broken honor and the appearance of the symptoms of a psychiatric phenomenon known as "longing to die" in the subconscious of the public."

On the second part of the article series on October 22, 1989, he gives a wider coverage on the village guard system and further expresses his criticisms:

> "84 years ago, Sultan Abdulhamit, made tribal chiefs organize paramilitary forces called 'Hamidiye Cavalry Regiment' (Hamidiye Alayları). They could not protect the region; moreover they tormented the public and deeply reinforced the semi-feudal structure of the region. Now, in the republican period, 'Hamidiye Cavalry Regiment' has been revived... I have complained for weeks about this shameful practice that reinforces 'the hegemony of a person, group and class', disregarding the Constitution and transforming the state into the governance of tribes... This so-called 'safety measure' is a great threat to the state and the nation; it is even a greater peril than the PKK or terrorists."

Ecevit expresses that the ones not accepting the village guard system are identified as 'traitors, collaborators' and the ones accepting are becoming a target. He also reaffirms that the public is caught between two fires.

In his article entitled "Notes from the Southeast" published in Cumhuriyet newspaper on December 4, 1989, Celal Başlangıç again draws the attention to the

shades of gray regarding the village guard system and questions the perception that the village guards are voluntarily armed and are "pro-statists". Başlangıç informs that the village guards and the villagers whose chiefs of tribe are village guards living in Çatak, Gürpınar and Bahçesaray districts of Van, immigrated first to Van, then to the metropolitan cities located in the west and south of Turkey. Prior to their departure they undersold their animals and also faced poverty to the degree of starvation in the places where they immigrated. For this reason, they were forced to return back to their villages but when they return they had no other chance than being a village guard. Başlangıç defines this situation as "the vicious circle of the village guard system". In his article published on January 11, 1990, he informs that the villagers of Taşdelen, Uludere district of Hakkari, who were the victims of a PKK raid three years ago, are now preparing to seek asylum in Iraq, the country where their kinship was massacred a year ago with chemical weapons, as they grew weary of "prohibited life" and oppression.

Başlangıç tells the conversation done with a soldier who is controlling the entrances and exits to the village while waiting for the permission of the commander with Cumhur Keskin and Fuat Atalay of SHP stating that they were deputies of ANAP and DYP. The soldier expresses that the whole village is pro-PKK and infidels and since there is a curfew the soldiers shoot anything that moves during night, and use ten thousand ammos in a night. The villagers of Taşdelen talk about the "prohibited life" in the village and inform that the ones not bearing this situation abandons the village and the ones staying have to hand over their identity cards, if they refuse to become village guards, and are not allowed to leave the village. They further express that they can only use the one fourth of the village as the rest is paved with landmines and they are obliged to carry three loads of wood by mules each month to the gendarmerie station. They also verify the argument that soldiers open fire to any moving body by stating that they cannot even go to the toilets located outside of their homes after night falls.

According to a news published in Milliyet newspaper on May 23, 1991, the Governor Adnan Darendeliler has a chat with the village guards in Çatak district of Van. The village guards address him as "Governor Pasha"[13] and say "We do not even let a bird fly in the region. Without our knowledge no one can pass through here. If someone dares, we will open fire." The governor then asks "Will you also open fire at me if I come to the district at night?" and the village guards reply;

"Since we will not recognize you in the dark, we will also open fire at you." This response gives an idea on how the village guards identify many victims who died "accidentally" as "terrorists" and records these kind of incidents as "success" stories.

In both of his articles published in Cumhuriyet newspaper in January and February, Celal Başlangıç mentions the emigration of villagers who are "caught between two fires" at Çukurca, Beytüşşebap and Eruh villages. Başlangıç also points to the mentality behind the desertion of the villages due to emigrations while referring to a high rank security officer who depicts the terrorists as a fish in an aquarium, and the people of the region as the aquarium itself. Başlangıç interprets the desertion of the villages as draining water from the aquarium. On the other hand, it is not hard to imagine that this draining process does not fulfill its purpose in any way, moreover creates new and different problems. According to a news published in the weekly newspaper Yeni Ülke, issue of June, 23-29, 1991, in some of the villages of Mardin, Diyarbakır and Cizre, the people took the decision of not trading with the village guards and not sitting at the village coffee shops. The shopkeepers who refused to sell their goods to the village guards are taken under custody by the gendarmes and as a reaction to this, the other shop owners close up their shops as well. On the other hand, the news appearing in the same newspaper on the issues of September, 22-29 and October 6-12, 1991, entitled "The village guard system is collapsing" and "The village guard system is a black stain" are based on the expressions of the villagers and village guards. These titles are referring the problems experienced and caused by the village guards, the wide-spread resignations and the reaction of the state on these resignations. The following expression of one of the village guards is just like a summary of the news:

> "Every time we receive a salary, we grieved because we know that this money is the cost of the spilled blood... I was both ashamed and terrified. I have not met anyone in the village who is pleased to do this job."

On the same newspaper's issue of December 15-21, 1991, it is reported that the resignations that continued since March are now increasing as the expiration date of "amnesty phase" set by the PKK approaches. The name of the villages, families, tribes and individuals who resigned from being village guards and who

did not, who never accepted it in the first place, who refused and immigrated to other places are all enlisted in the news name by name just like producing a mapping of the region.

Similar news is again on the agenda approximately after five years. On June 9, 1995, according to a news appearing on the front page of Yeni Politika newspaper, after the expiration date set by the PKK on the village guards to lay down their arms, that started on February 25 and ended on May 31, the attacks of the organization on the villages of the village guards increased. Returning back to 1991, the circumstances surrounding village guards are still "between two fires". According to a news on Yeni Ülke newspaper, issue of December 15-21, 44 village guards were taken under custody in Heşet village located in Pervari district of Siirt, after joining the funeral ceremony of a guerrilla who died during a clash that took place in his village. They were released except for 8 of them who were held responsible for the deaths of the military men during the clash. It is further reported that after the release, the village guards abandon their guns in front of the station.

On February 17, 1992, Ahmet Taner Kışlalı of Cumhuriyet newspaper had an interview with the political scientist Doğu Ergil. Upon Kışlalı's question of "So, can the village guard system be abolished in accordance with the requests of some people?" Ergil replies as "The village guard system is not effective, besides it contributes to the survival of the chieftainship system that loses more and more its influence." Ergil further responds to the question "Won't the villagers be totally vulnerable when the village guards retreat?" as such:

> "The village guards can only resist as long as the military men or task forces help. But support does not come easily... Furthermore, there is an authority gap between civilians and the military. The military men who served there have to be unquestionably and unconditionally subject to the civil authority."

It is further analyzed in a news published on Nokta journal on February 23, 1992 that the issue is not a simple authority absence. The news identifies the village guards as "the group stuck between the oppression of the state and the PKK" and informs that the majority of the village guards are forced to lay down their weapons while pointing to the social and psychological dimensions of this state of being stuck:

> "Even though they are identified as terrorists; shooting his fellow townsmen, his neighbor or his villager became a difficult task for him."

On June 19, 1992, Mustafa Balbay prepared a news on the insurance and union demands of the village guards living in Soğuksu village, Van in Cumhuriyet newspaper. Balbay finished his article by making the following remark:

> "Even though it is announced that the village guard system is temporary and it will be abolished in time, the terrorism in the Southeast has become an occupation and a source of income for some of the people."

d. "The village guards cause more damage than good"

In the news entitled "The village guards cause more damage than good" published in Cumhuriyet newspaper on July 18, 1992, the President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Diyarbakır and member of the board of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) Ferit Cemiloğlu's following statement was included:

> "With the 1,5 trillion that is paid to the village guards in this five years, 150 factories would have been established and 45 thousand people would have the possibility to be employed and there would not be this much bloodshed."

It is also reported that during this five years that the village guard system has been in practice, 172 village guards were murdered by the PKK militants and 500 of them were dismissed due to their involvement in crimes such as abduction, gun smuggling and abuse of power. The opinion of the City President of the People's Labor Party (HEP) Lawyer Hüseyin Turhallı on the issue also took part in the same news:

> "The state, in order not to be subject to the social and political welfare demands of the people living in the region, hangs onto the village guard system, which solely depends on consumption and the policy to use the Kurd against the Kurd".

The news published in Cumhuriyet newspaper on February 1, 1993 included the criticisms of HEP Mardin Deputies Ali Yiğit and Mehmet Sincar

regarding the village guard system. Yiğit and Sincar affirmed that the main source of the terrorism in the state of emergency region is the village guard system itself. In the news of March 11, 1993, the report prepared by the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions (Türk-İş) Southeast Committee was included. The committee reported that in the region "individuals with Kurdish origins are seen as potential criminals, people are afraid of the state organs, an arbitrary attitude was taken with the village guard system."

In the news of the Gündem newspaper published on October 19, 1992, it is reported that the village guards "are killed by the military men, the heating expenses of the gendarmerie station is cut from their salaries, pay extortion to the head of the village guards" and are subject to various oppression of the state. Even though it was mentioned in other issues of the newspaper from time to time, the attacks and the oppression of PKK against the village guards were not mentioned in this news. The news of Gündem newspaper on July 14, 1992 includes the statement of Mehmet Sönmez, one of the village guards of Begar village of Şemdinli that was "accidentally" bombed by the Turkish warplanes according to an allegation:

> "After the bombardment, there were at least a thousand bullets in our tent... This is absolutely hostility. I mean, they are killing us because we are Kurdish... Being a member of the PKK or a village guard does not matter to them... We became village guards by using their rifles. But they do not put any difference between two."

This news reminds the incident known as Roboski massacre that took place on December 28, 2011, in which 34 villagers were bombed while carrying smuggled goods from the border in Uludere district, Hakkari. However, like today, back then the number of individuals who had hard time hearing and understanding the needs of the people living in the region were significantly high and in which many of them are in important positions. The news reported by Halil Nebiler in Cumhuriyet newspaper on May 25, 1993 included the statements of the State of Emergency Governor Ünal Erkan:

> "I think, the village guard system must continue... Today, village guards are a legal part of the security forces that are active in the region. They serve great. They hinder the organization... The organization wants their abolishment... In my opinion, temporary village guard system must be-

> come permanent. Whether under the name of "The Village Guard Organization" or any other name, from employment procedures to clothing, from duties-authorities and responsibilities to the social rights and retirement conditions, the system must be re-regulated. It is important that this system should continue even if the PKK does not exist."

Nebiler expresses that he has hard time understanding Erkan who wishes the continuity of the village guard system even when the state of emergency is lifted and the PKK is neutralized.

According to a news published in Gündem newspaper on May 31, 1993, 33 village guards in Tizyan village, Mardin resigned from their duty after the statement of Abdullah Öcalan affirming that the village guards may be pardoned provided that they lay down their arms. The village guards were then taken under custody and tortured for 15 days so that they will not resign from their duty. Upon their release, they applied to the Human Rights Association Diyarbakır Branch on the grounds that they abandoned their villages and are now in a life-threatening situation. On the other hand, the following statement of İsmet Metin, the Governor of Ağrı, was published in Cumhuriyet newspaper on June 5, 1993:

> "We also started to distribute guns to the villagers who are willing to fight against the PKK terrorists, this development is a first in our region and this is a pleasing development indeed."

The following expression also took place in the news:

> "Metin expressed that until now, stipendiary village guard system has been in practice against acts of terror in the region, but today for the first time, villagers become village guards in their cities by their own will."

It can be predicted that the joy in Metin's statements was mainly shared by the superiors of the governor considering the other news. Moreover, it is a known fact that the situation in Ağrı is not valid for the other cities in the region. As a matter of fact, according to the news published on Gündem newspaper on August 6, 1993, 11 village headsmen of Kızıltepe district of Mardin were summoned at the Gendarmerie Command and were told that "Either you become a village guard or a supporter of Apo [Abdullah Öcalan]. There is no

way in between" and were given time to make up their minds and if they do not become village guards, their villages will be set on fire. The villagers told the journalist: "We will neither be a village guard, nor a supporter of Apo and we won't abandon our villages."

The title of the news in Cumhuriyet newspaper published on August 11, 1993 written by Tuncay Özkan is "the scandalous report for the Southeast". The news included the stunning findings of the report prepared as a result of a series of investigations done in the Southeastern region by the Turkish Parliamentary Commission Investigating Unsolved Murders:[14]

> "For instance, village guards of Şenoba village, Eruh District of Şırnak were ascertained for having gunrunning. Diyarbakir State Security Court declared the decision of arrest in absentia. Although many times have passed over the enforcement of this decision, it has not transformed into an immediate arrest. At this point, village guards having arrest warrant have taken their money from the state every month. Despite all of this, they have not been arrested."

Özkan underlined another "scandalous incident" taking place in the report by these sentences:

> "In Ormandışı village of Silvan district, village guards of the nearby village organized a raid ‹as if the PKK did it›. They tricked Gendarmerie, into opening fire at people."

The most important precaution taken by the state in order to prevent these kind of scandals generally manifests itself in the field of clothing and training. In fact, according to the news published in Milliyet newspaper on November 11, 1994, the village guards now participate in the regular military trainings, standardized clothes were distributed to them and the word "village guard" was written on their caps. The statement of a military officer was also included in the news:

> "We are making fundamental changes in the village guard system. We subject village guards to a training process like soldiers... We have begun to get positive results."

However these positive results were to be overshadowed by other negative developments. Subjecting village guards to a military training and making them wear standardized clothes indeed seems like a system that is in need of a fundamental change for the soldiers who had already passed through a military training and wearing a standardized uniform. According to a news published on Özgür Ülke newspaper on June 25, 1994, the village guards opened fire at a group raiding villages and collecting money in guerrilla clothes in a region between Ağrı and Van and killed eight individuals. Upon discovering that the victims were soldiers, the village guards were taken under custody but were released later on.

On November 26, 1993, Cumhuriyet newspaper covered the criticisms of Muzaffer Arıkan, the Vice General Secretary of SHP and Mardin Deputy, on the proposal regarding the appointment of the village guards for safeguarding the ballot boxes:

> "The citizens who are in between the PKK and village guards may abstain from voting. Ensuring the safety of ballot boxes is the duty of the state›s security forces."

Arıkan also provided information on the individuals tortured and murdered by the village guards and argued that it is against the law that convicts and individuals older than 60 years old are becoming village guards. In the same news, the response of the DYP Parliamentary Group Deputy Chairman Turhan Tayan on the question regarding the meeting that took place between the leaders of the tribe and the high rank officers in Ankara was also included:

> "During the meetings, the chiefs of the tribes expressed their problems and shared their proposed solutions as individuals who are familiar with the region."

According to another news published on the same page, it is reported that the leaders of the tribes had a meeting with the President Süleyman Demirel, the Prime Minister Tansu Çiller, the Minister of Internal Affairs Nahit Menteşe and Gendarmerie General Commander *General* Aydın İlter and demanded an insurance system and a raise in the salaries of the village guards.

e. "Reform" by means of becoming deputies and civil servants: The official side of the village guard system

In his article entitled "Village Guard System or the Charter of Alliance" published in Gündem newspaper on December 7, 1993, Sedat Yurtdaş shared his opinion regarding the issue:

> "For some time now, village guards were presented to the public opinion by statesmen through TVs as if they are the "legitimate representatives" of Kurdish people. Apparently with this understanding, it is decided that they have to pay a visit to Ankara once in a month."

Yurtdaş affirmed that the village guards are authorized in accordance with the law to only defend the villages they are appointed and it is "against the law" that they are sent outside their villages for long periods and even appointed to the "cross-border" operations. He further supported his argument by giving examples and stating that the equivalent of this system is in fact a "mercenary system" and again according to the laws, the system should be voluntary but in reality it is based on "state coercion". Yurtdaş further provided examples on the conditions surrounding the village guards who were tied to the state by their "stomachs" as they were forced to choose to become village guard system since they can no longer practice their traditional economic activities due to the clashes in the region; and the ones who were "pardoned" and whose "reputation was reestablished" since they accepted to become village guards as ex-convicts, but still tied to the state by their "handcuffs" due to their "hunchbacks". In addition to these, the journalist also mentions the village guards who are tied to the state by their "primitive systems" due to acceptance of the state's offer whose aim is to preserve the ancient feudal structure and the "corrupted structures" for consolidating the position it holds. Yurtdaş affirms that this setting is the perfect equivalent of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments and the Charter of Alliance of 1808 with the only difference from the past that the Kurds are now an organized group in which the Democracy party was a manifestation of this fact. Yurtdaş further argued that the preparations are now made for upgrading the village guards to the "state of elected representatives" during a time when an application to the Constitutional Court on the order for dissolving the Democracy Party was issued, a time for a possible merging of by-election with the local elections. As

a matter of fact, in his article published in Cumhuriyet newspaper on March 8, 1994, Celal Başlangıç expressed that during the local elections of March 27, there was a "drastic increase in the number of village guard applicants" and the village guards, head of the village guards carrying 'the state's gun on their back' and the certain individuals gaining the support of the village guards were shown as candidates of DYP, ANAP, RP and MHP. Başlangıç further added that:

> "So the 'political solution for the Kurdish issue', which we have debated for all these years was this: making temporary village guards mayors of the city..."

According to the news published in Gündem newspaper on March 14, 1994 during a meeting held at the Police Station in Cizre, Şırnak under the presidency of the District Governor in which the City Centre Gendarmerie Commander was also present, it is briefed that the authorities asked for the support of the people on the fight against the PKK and informed them that the head of the village guard Kamil Atak as a mayor candidate of RP must win the elections.

On March 26, 1994, in a news published in Gündem newspaper, it is reported that the people living in Yüksekova district of Hakkari were pressured by the head of the village guard Ahmet Zeydan in order to vote for the DYP, whereas the village guards are in conflict with the special team that asks for the withdrawal of the DYP candidate and supports the MHP candidate. According to a news published in Özgür Ülke newspaper on November 1, 1994, the SHP was positive towards showing the head of the village guard Hazım Babat, who were not accepted by the DYP, as a candidate while in search for votes in the region. Another practice seen in this period is to make village guards in close contact with the state not only as deputies but also as civil servants. According to the news of Özgür Ülke newspaper on July 11, 1994, many civil servants and workers employed at the healthcare centers, post offices and similar state institutions in Sason district of Batman are village guards at the same time and the names of the identified individuals and the institutions where they are employed were enlisted in the news. Another solution was thought for the ones who were not employed in these institutions. According to a news published on the front page of Özgür Ülke newspaper on June 7, 1994, Governorship of Hakkari established a foundation for health problems and trainings of "the village guards that are

labeled as 'cahş' [traitor] and isolated by the people." According to the news, "Hakkari Temporary Village Guards Healthcare, Education and Solidarity Foundation" will provide training programs to the village guards in order to "raise consciousness on Atatürk's principles, national unity and solidarity and indivisibility of the nation and maintaining the integrity of the motherland." The number of similar associations and foundations will increase rapidly during the 2000s when there is an effort in the abolition of the village guard system.

f. Struggle for domination on the village guards

An unknown aspect of the village guard system is mentioned in the news of Özgür Ülke newspaper on July 17, 1994. It is reported in the news that the immigrants who fled from the war in Afghanistan 10 years ago and settled in Erciş district of Van are working as village guards and pressuring the nearby villages with the power they got from the station in their villages. According to the news of the newspaper on July 24, 1994, the villages that were forced to choose to either become village guards or abandon the village on the grounds that they are "aiding and harboring the PKK", were threatened by the state that the villages will be set on fire and many villages were actually set on fire as they refused both of the options in the given time. The news published on Özgür Ülke newspaper on August 1, 1994 depicts in detail and based on the statements of the eye-witnesses the tortures endured by the villagers who were forced to become village guards. These witnesses that were frequently mentioned on the other issues of the newspaper include tortures such as; the villagers getting stripped naked and were forced to lay down or dragged on the snow, some of the villagers were subject to violence to the degree that their eyes are removed or their limbs were cut, their houses and crops were set on fire and even sometimes no news will be received from these villages as the entrances and exits are prohibited when these kind of incidents are taking place. It is also reported in the news that the state labels the villagers who refuse to be village guards as the members of the PKK. In another news of Özgür Ülke on August 13, 1994, it is informed that in Darıca village, Yüksekova district of Hakkari, the weapons of 47 village guards were confiscated and their houses were damaged by the state on the allegation that they were aiding the PKK. Another news on the same page reports the statement of Cemil Bayık, one

of the PKK commanders:

> "We made a pardon call in the 3rd National Conference of our party. It had an influence. In many places, people have abandoned the gangs. However, now the state has also engaged in these gang activities."

It is evident that in an environment where the state labels the ones who are not village guards and the PKK labels the village guards as gangs, the ones who are not village guards are afraid of the state whereas the village guards who are afraid of the PKK change sides from time to time and then become the target of the other side. The village guards who repent while asking for the forgiveness of the PKK this time get punished by the state. It is apparent that the current and ex village guards are in need of protection by "someone". On the other hand, considering the news of August 19, 1994 which informs that the houses that were built in order to be given to the villagers whose villages were set on fire in Akçay village of Şırnak, will be provided on one condition that they will become village guards, may be interpreted as the state seeks the way to promote the village guard system as it witnessed the resignation of the village guards who were coerced to become one in the first place. However it is also evident that these kind of measures was not put into practice everywhere and was not even efficient.

As a matter of fact, on the headlines of Özgür Ülke newspaper on September 6, 1994, it is stated that four hundred village guards in Pervari district of Siirt laid down their weapons on the grounds that all the special teams appointed to the region have ties with the MHP and accepted all the Kurds as enemy and the village guards were put forward in the frontlines by these teams during the operations and were afraid to be executed by gunfire during the clashes. According to the September 7, 1994 dated issue of the newspaper there was an increase in the attacks against the village guards in three villages of Siirt and Erzincan who did not pay heed to the "resignation" announces made by the PKK for a long time. Similar attacks, usurpations and death news on the village guards living in other cities were frequently reported by the newspaper in the following days. The news published on Özgür Ülke on September 12, 1994 includes the statement of Şemdin Sakık, one of the PKK commanders, which affirms that the village guard system is based on financial encouragement, and the village guards who cannot receive their incomes change sides and today the

village guards consist of the logistics sources of the guerrilla.

Another strategy developed by the state in order to win the domination on village guards is analyzed in a news published on Özgür Ülke newspaper on December 13, 1994: according to this news, in Ergani district of Diyarbakır, the teachers working in the villages that refused to become village guards were appointed to other villages that accepted the village guard system. According to a news published on December 21, 1994, the villages in Varto district of Muş, the villagers who were forced to become village guards were given "temporary village cards" and the village headmen who demanded the clearance of the roads that were blocked due to heavy snowfall were replied by the Centre Gendarmerie Commander as "you help us, we will serve you". Another news of Özgür Ülke published on December 26, 1994 reports that a 14 year old child who stepped on a landmine and got wounded was denied of treatment at Diyarbakır Military Hospital on the grounds that his father was not a village guard. The father, who refuses to be a village guard, then took his child to Dicle University Research Hospital where the child was able to receive a treatment. Another news of Özgür Ülke published on January 24, 1995, reports that the village mosque located in Bismil district was set on fire by the military men upon the refusal of villagers in becoming a village guard. The fact that the basic rights to public services of the citizens depends on the condition of being a village guard overshadows the arguments claiming that the system is based on "voluntariness". On the other hand, it gives the impression that this voluntariness is based on creating another ethnical and religious segregation. The news published in Cumhuriyet newspaper on January 4, 1995 includes the expressions of Halit Can, 55 years old village guard who lost his relatives during a PKK raid on Hamzalı village of Kulp district, Diyarbakır. While standing at the corpse of a guerrilla, Halit Can stated that:

> "The PKK has no religion and the state has no beliefs. Although we did not want, Commander of the Sivrice Station made us village guards by force... You say that these are Armenians. How can they be Armenians? See, this one is circumcised, if he was Armenian, he would be uncircumcised."

According to a news published in Özgür Ülke on January 8, 1995, in Cizre district of Şırnak a clash broke out between the village guards who were on guard and the members of the Gendarmerie Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism Unit (JITEM) who came to check on them. Following the clash, 15 village guards

were taken under custody. On the headlines of January 10, 1995, it is expressed that as a result of the raids against the villages located in Derik district of Mardin, 150 village guards and relatives of the village guards were taken under custody by the gendarme and were released afterwards. The bodies of three heads of the village guards who allegedly died during the clashes were returned back to their families. The news also includes the statements of the released village guards:

> "Military men always tortured. They said that 'you played a trick on the state, and some of you here will be dead bodies. From now on, you will constantly pay a visit to this place.'"

According to the news reported by the newspaper after two days, a second raid was organized against the villages and no news yet to be heard from four heads of the village guards who were taken under custody. On the same issue of January 12, 1995, another news reports that a similar raid was organized against the village of a village guard in Bismil district of Diyarbakır and the military men informed the families of the village guards who were taken under custody as: "Your husbands are being punished for aiding in the PKK. The courts will chase them down after they are released from the custody. You too, abandon the village immediately."

In his article published in Cumhuriyet newspaper on April 16, 1995, Mustafa Balbay mentioned the draft report of the Turkish Parliamentary Commission Investigating Unsolved Murders and included the following statement from the report regarding the village guards:

> "Tribe chiefs, who are also village guards, are in a noncompliant attitude. They carry out a cruel oppression for the ones who are not supporting them. They blame people who are not their advocates as PKK supporters."

Moreover, Balbay also informed that the report also includes the allegations –that were detected many times in the past and expressed both in the National Assembly and by the press- that the village guards commit crimes with the weapons provided by the state and keep on getting their salary but could not be caught and give a part of their salary to the head of the village guards. The news that was published on April 19, 1995 included the suggestions contained in the final version of the report that Balbay mentioned recently:

> "The village guard system, became the new center of illegal activities and failed to be effective in the fight against the PKK despite the increasing number of village guards. It has to be abolished. The state, by working on new possibilities, should provide new employment opportunities for those people, while considering the option of paying the same salary as they were given every month without ordering them to work."

g. "Prohibited villages" for the individuals who are not village guards, "strategic villages" exclusively for the village guards

According to a news published in Yeni Politika newspaper on May 2, 1995 in addition to the food embargo in the villages without village guards located in Kulp and Lice districts, Diyarbakır, medical treatment of the villagers, prescription of medicine and fuel consumption is subject to permission and restriction. In order to go to the hospital, the patients first need to visit the station and will get their medicines only after getting their prescription is approved by the station. Moreover, it was forbidden to bring more than 10 liters of diesel oil into the village. The news informs that the embargo on food, medicine and diesel oil were allegedly done in order to prevent the villages that have no village guards in aiding the PKK. However, it is also expressed that the real motive behind these measures is the evacuation of the villages. In another news of the newspaper published on May 14, 1995, the villagers who were forced to abandon their villages located in Kulp and Lice districts as a result of these kind of oppression, were denied of visit to the cemeteries on religious holidays by the military. According to the news published in Yeni Politika newspaper on June 3, 1995 aid will be provided for constructing a home for the villagers who immigrated from the villages of Dersim to the center provided that they accept the village guard system and submit a written statement expressing that they immigrate "due to the terror". It is also reported that the villagers, who are encouraged to become village guards due to "lack of safety in the region" but still who "do not want to fight" were aware of the fact that if they sign the statement, the state will not be held responsible for the villages that were set on fire and affirmed that this is not true.

According to the news of Yeni Politika newspaper published on July 18, 1995, in order to keep the Kurds, who emigrated from their villages due to their refusal of village guard system, under control, village guard villages were

formed in Mediterranean and Central Anatolian Regions. It is also reported that weapons were distributed to the villages of Mersin and Hatay who are known as followers of MHP where the armed civilians control the entrance and exists to the villages at night and intimidates the public while roaming around the village during day. According to a news published in Demokrasi newspaper on October 24, 1996, after distribution of weapon to the Turkmen villages last year in Samandağ district, Hatay, the village guard system was also imposed on the Arab villages, however these villages refused to become village guards. The news also includes the rejection of a village headman that expressed that getting armed in this respect "will turn us into Sarajevo". It is evident that if certain high rank state authorities have the common sense that some village headmen have, the problem would be solved rapidly.

The news on Yeni Politika newspaper on August 1, 1995 reports that some habitants of the villages under village guard system in Şemdinli district of Hakkari, abandoned their villages due to the fact that they cannot be protected against the guerrilla attacks. For these villagers, a camp area with 100 tents near another village that is under the village guard system was formed by the Commando and the Infantry Battalions. A similar but an improved version of this regulation of putting tents would again become the current issue 4 years later. The news published in Özgür Bakış newspaper on October 16, 1999 mentions the "strategic village" regulation that is in fact attempted to be put in practice since 1994. It is informed that the villages that are under the village guard system located in Beytüşşebap-Şırnak, Şemdinli-Hakkari and Çatak-Van were evacuated and the village guards were forced to live together in the newly formed villages, however these villages were kept under pressure both by the state forces as well as the PKK.

Along with several news as well as the one entitled "The Village Guard System Oppression" published in Yeni Politika newspaper on August 7, 1995 the following phrase was added underneath the news titles: "Censored. We cannot publish the news appearing here as it creates a justification for the confiscation of the newspaper by Istanbul State Security Courts Prosecution Office (DGM)." In the uncensored version of the newspaper, it is reported that the village guards organized raids in numerous villages located in Kozluk district of Batman, in order to force the village guard system upon them. Many of the news in the inner pages that has the "censored" term on them is in fact

about various oppression exerted by the village guards onto the villagers and the fact that villagers resigning from their duty as village guard were taken under custody.

Another development serving as a base to the oppressions were revealed in a news published in Demokrasi newspaper on January 1, 1996. According to this news, the village guards of Narlı village, Çatak district of Van, were summoned to the station on the grounds that they voted for HADEP in the general elections of December 24, 1995. They were threatened as "If you are protecting the state, you have to vote for a party that protects the state". The licensed guns of the village guards of Kızıltaş village were also confiscated.

According to the news published on March 1, 1996 prepared by Seyhan Toprak, the guns of the village guards were taken back in the several villages of Hakkari, Şırnak and Mardin on the grounds that they voted for HADEP in the elections. However, this cannot be interpreted as the dissolution of the village guard system but rather a sign that it cannot have domination via village guards over the region known as Botan since in other villages and regions the ones wishing to resign and return back the weapons were not accepted and some villagers are still employed coercively as village guards.

A news published in Cumhuriyet newspaper on August 5, 1995 included the report entitled "Eastern Question: Diagnoses and Findings of a Research" prepared by Prof. Dr. Doğu Ergil on behalf of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey. The diagnoses of the village guard system according to the report were as follows:

> "People in the region have been paying a heavy price for years now. One of the mechanisms receiving this cost is the village guard system. The purpose, the authority and the limits of the village guard practice are not exactly defined. The village guards should have the duty of protecting the rural population. Village guards should not be involved in the raids or in the security operations against other villages as an alternative or additional military power. It is known that because of their wish to avoid being punished for their prior crimes and be under the wings of the state, some people choose to be village guards. Although the number of those people is few, this situation is important because it presents a double sided legal system that is one of biggest complaints of the people living in the region."

According to a news published again on Demokrasi newspaper on April 10, 1996, DYP deputy Selim Ensarioğlu defined the village guard system as "armed KIT [the initials of the Turkish abbreviation corresponding to 'public economic attempt']" and affirmed that the system should be abolished while not leaving the village guards on their own.

h. Pursuits and deadlocks: "village guard station", "hunter squads", "foresters" "special village guards" and "Yüksekova gang"

According to a news published in Demokrasi newspaper on January 16, 1996 13 "village guard stations" were established around Diyarbakır so that the village guards can conduct road inspections. It is reported in the news that these stations create uneasiness among the public, in which they are concerned that with these roads the illegal trades will get under the control of the village guards and their pressure on the public will increase. In fact, a news published on Demokrasi newspaper on March 19, 1996 confirms that after the establishment of village guard control points on the roads of Eruh district, Siirt, the villagers are subjected to arbitrary inspection, the controls turned into an embargo of food and fuel and "robbery and theft were legitimized."

On March 29, 1996, a news in Demokrasi newspaper included the joint press release of Governor of Urfa and the Brigade Commander and announced the establishment of Hunter Squads while inviting the public to join these forces:

> "Within the context of No. 4654 law (came into force in 1944 and changed in 1991) "on obligation to defense the country against the inner enemies" ...Hunter Squads (Avcı Birlikleri), contributing to protection of the country with the armed forces in emergency situations and during the wartime."

When this law is inspected, it can be seen that the law points to a kind of mobilization and almost all women and men "capable of holding a gun" will join the defense forces. The fact that law is revitalized and the name of hunter squads –that does not exist in the legislation- is given to this new regulation gives the impression that the continuity of the village guard system under different name and law or its reinforcement is aimed. On the other hand, the fact that this regulation has not been in practice yet can be explained by not finding

sufficient authorities that share the proposal of the project makers or that the ones content with the village guard system are quite sure with the regulation to the degree that they do not need another initiative.

At the same page, there is a news reporting that the Diyarbakır DGM Chief Prosecutor defended that there should not be a legal investigation for the village guards that raided a station in Beytüşşebap, Şırnak and freed one prisoner. The DGM Chief Prosecutor explained this decision by stating that the village guards are civil servants and they are liable to the Act of the Legal Status of Civil Servants. Therefore, the village guards can only be put on a trial with the permission of the district governorate and the provincial administration board. Even if these permissions were taken, putting the village guards on a trial seems nearly impossible due to the similar binding articles taking place in the Law. On the other hand, regarding certain crimes that threaten the security of the state, the village guards are not that privileged. Nokta journal, the issue of 28 April-4 May 1996, included a file entitled "Are the village guards the gun that shoot its owner?" that fully covers the village guard system. The information given by Diyarbakır DGM Chief Prosecutor Bekir Selçuk is shocking:

> "Now there are 117 temporary village guards whose trials continue. 78 of them are on trial for aiding and abetting to the PKK, 35 of them are on trial for organized and corporate gunrunning, 3 of them are of trial for organized illegal drug trafficking and one of them is on trial on the grounds of being a member of the PKK."

The news published in Milliyet newspaper on July 13, 1996, prepared by Özcan Ercan includes an interview conducted with a village guard of Birki village. The village guard's reply to the question regarding the abolition of the village guard system as follows:

> "My sister, instead of abolition, it is better if we all become village guards. Forget about the PKK, those who are not village guards... even they will be enough. As soon as our guns are taken from our hands, they will look for a single excuse to kill us. We are recognized, we are stigmatized. They are envious, they are jealous. They will kill us. We know this."

Ercan interprets this as:

> "This fear incorporated the jealousy and the hatred of the ones who could

> not become village guards towards the village guards. Thus they become more devoted to the state. They are ceaselessly talking about the state and the Republic. They say: 'This is our land, the land of the Republic, we will give our lives but won't give this land to the terrorism. The enemy of the state is also our enemy.'"

On the other hand, Ercan also states that this village has never been raided since its establishment and the village guards were never forced to defend their villages. He further expresses that instead of the PKK, the weapons go around the village, even the children play with their fathers' Kalashnikov, weapon is a part of the family and everybody feels "complete and safe with guns". Defining the public, the unarmed villagers as "the ones who could not be village guards" and defining the reaction of these people to the village guards as "jealously" could be seen as the result of the empathy formed between the journalist and the village guards. However, trying to explain the close bond between the village guards and their relatives with guns and the fact that they are not willing to lay down their weapons with security and employment concern and patriotic sentiments could be defined as –in its mildest expression- a lack of point of view. As a matter of fact, the sincerity of Ercan can be seen in this expression of him:

"I swear, if the state gives, they will wear these arms, including the children."

A similar empathy skill is owned by Taha Akyol, journalist at the same newspaper. In his column of August 30, 1996 entitled "The village guards are becoming 'forester'" Akyol informed that the Minister of State Nevzat Ercan is now working on a project that aims to "make 70 thousand village guards become 'foresters'". Akyol further expressed his thoughts on the issue:

> "The village guard system is a heavily debated topic, you say "we will abolish it" as an opposition party but when you come to the power, due to the complicated reality surrounding it, you somehow cannot abolish this system. You cannot just abandon and expect 70 thousand individuals depending on the state and fighting with the PKK to hit the road. If you abolish the village guard system, think about the drawbacks of founding a police station in the villages protected by village guards!... However, there are important problems caused by village guard system. Being an 'armed man' without being liable to a hierarchical strict legal system as

the police or the military has a negative impact on their psychology and on the regards about them."

The issue underlined by Akyol will serve as a base for the regulation that will be launched in the following days. The news in Demokrasi newspaper on October 28, 1996 covers the "special village guard system" that was launched in Van and Hakkari. According to the news, individuals who did his military service, has no criminal record and was not banned from the public services, at least primary school graduate, between 25-35, has no disability or illness could apply to become a special village guard. The ones whose application is accepted will be trained at the gendarmerie barricade and will be subjected to verbal exam and physical condition test. After all these processes, they will be employed with insurance and will take part in the operations not only in their own regions but also in other places. It is also informed that these special village guards will serve as some kind of a professional unit whereas the other village guards will stand by and function as reserved units.

The news entitled "Mardin, the City that Vanquished the Terror" written by Miyase Ilknur in Cumhuriyet newspaper on November 14, 1996 includes the observations on Mardin where the state of emergency is about to lift up and the city freed and calmed itself as Cizre, Silopi and Idil districts are bound to Şırnak. While having a conversation with a group of residents of Mardin on the reasons that ended the terror, Ilknur asks the question "Ok, the PKK in the mountains are driven back due to security forces' intense operations. So, what has happened to its militia force located in the districts?" Ilknur receives the reply "They now became village guards." Another news on the same page includes the statement of "The ex-militia forces of the PKK now became village guards" of the Governor Abdülkadir Tutaşı of DYP and a member of a big tribe.

Cumhuriyet newspaper on its issue of December 2, 1996, includes the article written by Jonathan Lyons of Reuters News Agency. By examining the DYP deputy, head of the village guards and tribe chief Sedat Bucak, whose name first came up as being the politician in the triangle of "politician- police- mafia" that became apparent after the Susurluk accident Lyons makes the deduction that the state is empowering the tribes by village guards. The article also includes the opinion of "local" historians and sociologists. Behlül Yavuz, who is receiving an "education on the history of tribes", expressed his thoughts as:

> "The state sustains a systematic policy in order to preserve the underdeveloped conditions of the region as it does not wish the Kurdish region to become stronger."

It becomes more evident in the news published on Demokrasi newspaper on March 9, 1997 how the leaders of the tribes become powerful by village guards. According to the news, as a part of the "uniformed gang" investigation, which is related to the drug smuggling at Yüksekova and numerous unsolved murders, the head of the village guards were taken under custody and a significant amount of weapon was found in the house of the Mayor of Yüksekova. These developments mobilized Zerdan and Jirki tribes; Mustafa Zeydan, the leader of Zeydan tribe, head of the village guards and the DYP deputy, as well as the leaders of the Jirki tribe Tahir Adıyaman and Mehmet Adıyaman came to Diyarbakır along with approximately hundred armed men and had a "meeting" with the State of Emergency Regional Governor and the military officials. On the other hand, it is evident that the state started to feel uneasy on the increasing pressure of the village guards.

According to the content of the headline "National Intelligence Organization (MIT): The village guard system should be abolished "appearing in Cumhuriyet newspaper on December 25, 1996, during the summit held at Çankaya Palace the Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan brings forward the report prepared by the MIT. The report emphasized that "now the time has come for the abolition of the temporary village guard system" that is the target of criticisms affirming that they are involved in great amounts of crime and reinforced the feudal structure in the region. As a matter of fact, according to a news published on Cumhuriyet newspaper on February 17, 1997, the village guards are now expected to return back their guns within 45 days after the implementation of the Law on Provincial Administration which was announced by the Official Gazette on September 4, 1996. It is also informed that the village guards did not return their guns back even though 5 months passed after the law was put into force.

i. "Lice is under custody"

It is evident that the local administrative and military officials did not approve of the new law urging them to lay dawn their arms and insisted on

the system. It is reported in the news entitled "Lice is under custody" published in Demokrasi newspaper on December 22, 1996 that 200 individuals were taken under custody as a result of the raid done to the houses in Lice district, where the people refused to become village guards. On December 25, 1996, the newspaper included the statements of the families who applied to the Human Rights Association Diyarbakır Branch. The families expressed that they were forced to abandon their villages as they did not accept the village guard system and settled in Lice. The families further expressed that their children were taken under custody and were forced to become village guards. The President of the Lice Culture and Solidarity Association Lawyer Tahsin Ekinci showed his reaction to this situation by following sentences:

> "People of Lice are under heavy oppression. They have been resisting for years in order not to become village guards. How much longer this resistance can continue, that I don't know. However, what is known that in a district where there is no leak and the number of military men is significantly higher than the civil population, so, what will these 100 people do by getting armed? Who will they shoot?"

On December 27 and 28, 1996, Cumhuriyet newspaper reported the reactions of the Confederation of the Revolutionary Trade Unions (DISK) and the Confederation of the Public Workers' Union (KESK) against the claims that approximately hundred men, aged between 15 and 70, were held in gendarmerie station and were forced to become village guards in Lice, Diyarbakır. In the following days, a committee consisting of unionists and lawyers together with the Human Rights Commission of Turkish Parliament visited Lice, carried on investigations and verified the claims. According to a news published in Demokrasi newspaper on February 21, 1997, the resignations of the children under 18 who were forced to become village guards in Lice, Diyarbakır, were not accepted. The brothers of Murat Karaman, aged 10, 12 and 14, were detained as a result of the raid on their villages. Murat Karaman, age 18, accepted to become a village guard so that his brothers would be released. Karaman also shows reaction to the refusal of his resignation. The reaction of the people of Lice actually tells that the state does not depend on the village guards as an armed force but rather as a morale force; the military and administrative domination over the region that it could not maintain with the armed forces now tries to

substitute it with the psychological superiority that it is working hard to win. Just like a man who vowed that he will not let go of the woman that wishes to break apart from him and would kill her instead of letting her be with someone else, the state also wishes the people to be dependent on it even though they do not love it, even though they do not use guns, the state wants them to hold onto the guns provided by it and in case they even refuse that, the state would then kill them. Preserving his pride and arrogance under the disguise of honor is an attitude that brings close the men and the state in patriarchal societies.

It is understood from the news published in Demokrasi newspaper on March 31, 1997 that Lice Battalion Commander Lieutenant Hacı İlbaş resented the rejection of the village guard system by the people of Lice. The news included the statements of İlbaş who promised credits for the ones accepting to become village guards and declared that the deserters will be counted as they did their military service if they become village guards. İlbaş further expressed that:

> "We have to increase the number of the village guards to 200. If this number reaches at 200, upon completion of the construction of the marble factory located in Fis Plain and done by Halis Toprak, we will transfer all armed people to the factory as workers."

It is also reported in the news that the extraordinary efforts of İlbaş, who is eager to be a bank manager, minister of defense and a factory owner all at the same time, do not yield positive outcomes. On the other hand, according to the news published in Ülkede Gündem newspaper on August 21, 1997, the workers working at Şakrat stone quarry in order to supply for the Lice marble factory were forced to become village guards by handing out arms to them. The workers refused this and resigned. The resigned workers were then replaced by the village guards from the nearby villages and the workers from Sinop. The news published in Demokrasi newspaper on March 12, 1997 informs that 9 village guard and their families were placed in Bağgöze village, Eruh district of Siirt where the village guards system has been refused for many years. As the state engages in practices such as bringing workers from Sinop to Lice and placing village guards in the villages where there is no village guard, one could not help but think that the state might be inspired by the Reform Plan for the East of 1925 which enabled the settlement of Kurdish people in the Turkish populated regions and placing Turkish people in the Kurdish populated areas.

On December 27, 1996 an interesting news was published in Cumhuriyet newspaper. The news mentions a report entitled "tribes, religious orders, sheikhs and sayyids" prepared by a unit under the control of RP General Vice President Abdülkadir Aksu. The report includes the following argument:

> "The power of the tribes on electors has halved between the years 1993-96 in the East and Southeast... Village guard practice has a great impact on the decrease of the power of the tribes. With the village guards, especially, money flows into the villages, and as villagers drift away from the area of influence of the tribes, they got closer to the village guards. Tribes lost their feature of presenting a common attitude in the elections after the 1990s. Now, it is possible to have two different party candidates from the same tribe and this plays an important role in dividing the votes."

Knowing that this argument is totally opposite to the previous data and still expressing and sharing it with the public opinion must have been done in order to provide a base for another argument taking place in the report which states that "as the tribes lose their power on the electors, the votes of the RP and HADEP in the region increases." By relating a phenomenon, that occurred due to a number of other reasons, to the village guard system if the aim is not to invert a discourse that is aimlessly repeated while acknowledging the truth that goes unnoticed, then either a confusion was intended or it was just a poor analysis.

j. "Is the village guard system getting dissolved?"

On August 12, 1997, Mustafa Balbay again mentions the village guard system in his column at Cumhuriyet newspaper:

> "The negative aspects of the village guards system are often emphasized. Lately, it is on the agenda of 55th government as well. Vice-president Bülent Ecevit said that this system has to be rearranged. However, by rearrangement, the village guards understand "money". They always look for ways for benefiting more from the opportunities of the state."

Balbay gives examples from the list of crimes prepared by Diyarbakır office of the newspaper, which shows the crimes committed by the village guards in the last month. Balbay further stated that this situation provided a

"base for a 'separate criminal network' resulted from the village guard system in the region." On the other hand, it can be understood that the state is also aware of the tendency of the village guards that aims to benefit from the opportunities of the state and tries different way to take precautions. In this article entitled "Is the village guard system getting dissolved?" published in Ülkede Gündem newspaper on August 30, 1997, Cemil Gündoğan draws the attention to a decision taken during a meeting of National Security Council (MGK) and expresses that the discussion regarding the abolition of the state of emergency and village guard system is taking place differently than the previous debates. As Gündoğan reports, the income obtained from the fuel entering Turkey by Habur customs gate was thoroughly discussed during the MGK meeting and an emphasis on how this income will be distributed while being "in accordance with the national interest and in a manner providing social justice in the region" took place in the final declaration. According to Gündoğan, this emphasis on the redistribution of the most important income of the region is a sign for an attempted change in the status quo to the disadvantage of the leaders of the village guards, who benefit the most from the current distribution.

In his article published in Cumhuriyet newspaper on November 20, 1997 Oral Çalışlar shared his observation done in the borders around Şırnak. Çalışlar mentioned the temporary village guards who wished that the system would obtain a permanent character and included the following words of Hazım Babat, leader of the village guards that is connected to Goyan tribe:

> "There is no such thing as Kurdish issue. This is an Armenian fabrication. There are thievery, fraud and terror. We are all Turkish."

In a news published in Ülkede Gündem newspaper on January 30, 1998, it is reported that the leader of the village guards Abbas Babat, also known as the "man" of Hazım Babat and has been a village guard for the last 10 years, was caught with 8 Kalashnikovs, 1 Sten automatic weapon and 35 thousand ammos. Babat confessed that he collected these from the dead bodies of the PKK guerrillas and soldiers and later sold them to the village guards. This news indeed verifies the argument of Hazım Babat regarding the thievery, fraud and terror.

According to a news published in Ülkede Gündem newspaper on January 17, 1998, the tenders for heating expenses of the stations located in

Hakkari, Çukurca, Yüksekova and Şemdinli and the food expenses of the Brigade Command were always given to the leader of the village guards who are also the members of "Yüksekova gang" for many years now. The astronomic amount on the food tender caught the attention of the military inspectors that started an inspection. According to a news published in Cumhuriyet newspaper on March 4, 1998, Diyarbakır Bar Association presented a "Southeast Report" to Hikmet Çetin, the President of the Assembly. In the report, it is stated that among other issues, the village guard system became "a serious menacing armed power" and "all these dirty works done while hiding behind the village guard identity created a rentier class in the region." One of the reasons for the disinterest of the Turkish General Staff in officially recruiting the village guards, with whom the General Staff was in close contact for many years during the regulations such as giving military trainings, providing standardized uniforms and joining the operations together, could be because the General Staff actually witnessed these realities surrounding the village guards. According to the news published in Milliyet on February 23, 1998, the author of the news Tolga Şardan informed that it is now discussed with the abolition of village guard system, whether the village guards will be employed as unqualified workers at the state institutions, whereas the Turkish General Staff is not willing to employ the village guards under the Turkish Armed Forces.

The news entitled "Holiday pardon of the village guards" published in Ülkede Gündem newspaper on April 7, 1998 included a statement of Cemil Bayık, a high rank PKK commander, expressing that the village guards who lay their weapons down in this three months will be pardoned. Bayık's call is as follows:

> "You are also not pleased with the situation you are in... When dirty businesses and slaughters happen and when Kurdish patriots were shot, the politicians in Ankara say 'our army is innocent; village guards are doing all those dirty businesses.' Whatsoever you do, you cannot ingratiate yourself with the state. No matter how much you fought against us, we have pursued this fight for freedom for the sake of your children's future... You should abandon this village guard system already. Quit stabbing your brothers in the back."

In fact the call of Bayık touches the uneasiness that the families of the village guards have. Four years ago before this call, according to a news published

on Gündem newspaper on April 4, 1994, the youngsters abandoning their village for not bearing the idea that their father is a village guard and many people who has a village guard in the family affirmed that they are not content with this situation. One of the young people replies the question on how he would feel if his father dies during an operation as:

> "I would hold the state responsible for that. Because my father was forced into this duty... If my father goes into combat, I will hold the state responsible. And, I will never defy the Kurdish freedom struggle."

According to a news published in Cumhuriyet newspaper on July 1, 1998 the village guard system was brought to the table at the last MGK meeting and it was expressed that in long term, dissolution of the village guard system will be possible:

> "According to preliminary studies discussed in National Security Council (MGK), amount of compensation, which is supposed to be paid when the service of temporary village guards terminated, can be increased if they demand for retirement. In order to encourage the village guards for retirement, the age of retirement can be reduced. Temporary village guards who have suitable physical conditions will be recruited by being integrated into police forces. It is provided that some of the temporary village guards will be recruited in the municipalities and they will be employed as private security forces."

According to a news published in Ülkede Gündem newspaper on July 17, 1998, after PKK increased their attacks on the village guards and stated that the ones laying their weapons down will be pardoned, in March, 2000 village guards resigned and it is anticipated that the resignations will continue. The state takes financial measures and works on a draft report for the improvement of the personal rights and for covering the healthcare costs. On one hand, a discussion is taking place on the damages and abolition of the village guard system; on the other hand the system is made more complicated and structural with the formation of battalions consisting of village guards and confessors. As a matter of fact, the news published in Milliyet newspaper on October 15, 1998, reports that "a specially trained village guard battalion known as 'Şimşekler'" was ambushed by the PKK in Çatak district of Van. The news also includes the

information that Şimşekler was established two years ago, at the beginning there were 200 people but later this number increased to 800 people and consisting of four battalions. It is also informed that the PKK confessors and the members of Alan and Özbek tribes are also a part of Şimşekler. Its commandership is done by Şaban Kahraman, leader of the village guards.

A little more than a year later, Şimşekler also vocalized their discontent. According to a news published in Özgür Gündem newspaper on January 3, 2000, the well-known leaders of the village guards in Van and the special village guard team known as Şimşekler declared their wishes on the abolition of the village guard system and the employment of village guards by the state in other jobs. However their wishes were not granted. A news published in Özgür Gündem on January 17, 2003 reports that one of the measures taken against the USA's war preparation against Iraq was the training of 300 village guards who were a part of Şimşekler Special Village Guard Team. A similar training was also started in Şemdinli district of Hakkari. Şimşekler was also brought to the agenda with the oppression they made on the villagers which was expressed during Pınar Selek's interview with the villagers living in Xrabedar, Gürpınar district of Van. The interview was published in Gündem newspaper on April 25, 2005 and also included how some of the individuals who first emigrated then returned back to their villages resisted the village guard system and how and why some of them accepted to become a village guard and the things they experienced during the operations they joined as village guards.

On February 11, 1999 in Cumhuriyet newspaper it is announced that the 73 year old Ali İhsan Bucak, cousin of the DYP Şanlıurfa Deputy Sedat Bucak, has become Şanlıurfa candidate of DSP in order to express his reaction against the gangs. This news is coherent with the statement that "the tribes are dividing" taking place in the report of the RP which was reported in the news on December 27, 1996. However it is questionable whether the cause of this division is the village guard system as it was claimed in the report. On the other hand, even though Ali İhsan Bucak, who identifies himself as a village guard and an Atatürkist, states that "Bucaks did not split into two parts. Only our political paths are parted", he adds that the tribe is also supporting him. The news also included the words of Bucak as "In my opinion, the village guard system should not be abolished. However, everyone should put their limits. We are not the state."

On April 25, 1999, according to a news done by Özgür Bakış newspaper,

even though HADEP got the majority of the votes, it could not pass the ten percent election barrier. The news also includes the names of the village guards who entered the assembly as deputies. According to the news, Hakkı Töre of Hakkari, Mehmet Sait Değer of Şırnak, Sedat Edip Bucak of Urfa became the deputies of DYP; Süleyman Çelebi of Mardin was the deputy of ANAP; and DYP, ANAP and DSP who showed the village guards as deputies won the elections in Şırnak, Beytüşşebap, Silopi, Uludere, Güçlükonak, İdil, Mezra, Uzungeçit, Şenoba and Kumçatı districts. However, it is also reported that DYP Hakkari Deputy Mustafa Zeydan and some of the village guards shown as candidates in Şırnak and Mardin could not get enough votes.

On November 2, 1999 Özgür Bakış newspaper covered one of the "village guard rape" incidents which are frequently mentioned but mainly go unpunished. According to the news that takes place in Kulp district of Diyarbakır, after losing his father, a girl, aged 14, starts living with her village guard relatives. She was raped by one of the village guardsmen staying in the flat and after the discovery of her pregnancy, the non-village guard relatives filed a complaint to the public authorities. The village guard who was summoned to the station was released after his statement was taken. According to the news on November 11, 1999 appearing in the same newspaper, the girl delivered a 7-month-old dead baby at the hospital whereas no news was received from the village guard that was accused of rape. On November 16, 1999, the newspaper informs that the girl who was the victim of a rape was killed following the decision of the family. The news also includes that a quarrel took place between the relatives who are village guards and the ones who are not.

On February 11, 2000, Özgür Bakış newspaper reports that in Hakkari, Van, Şırnak, Bitlis and Muş the village guards are asked of primary school diploma, they are informed that the weapons of the ones who do not own a diploma will be retrieved back. The news further argues that considering that the scarcity of the village guards that own a diploma, this regulation could be understood as a step towards the dissolution of the village guard system. According to another news published in Özgür Bakış newspaper on February 17, 2000, Mardin Regimental Command sends a statement to the district governorates and the battalion commands demanding a list of assets of the village guards and their former employment prior to becoming village guards. It is reported that information on the assets of the village guards were gathered from banks and directorates of

land registry and a further investigation is carried out in order to determine the number of current workers and the staff requirement in the state institutions. Some news may have given inspiration to the officials who wanted to bring a new regulation to the village guard system. For instance, according to a news published on October 19, 2001, 17 "imaginary village guards" that abandoned Sason district of Batman and settled in various cities received salary from the state for years by either benefiting from the name similarity or by using the names of their dead relatives. It would be more suitable to quote the short news that was published in Milliyet newspaper on March 12, 2000:

> "The Right Path Party (DYP) Aydın Deputy and the former Minister of Internal Affairs Nahit Menteşe, had answered the questions related to the lost guns in Batman by saying 'I do not remember'. However he started to gain his memory now. After his meeting with Çiller, Menteşe said to Milliyet that there may be an infraction of law during the delivery of the guns that were imported by Batman Governor, to the village guards. Mentese, who expressed that he saw the forces with special clothes during his visit in Batman, also spoke as following: "I got the impression that village guards have been arranged. Guns were distributed to the village guards, to the voluntary ones. At this point, an infraction of law might have taken place."

It is evident that the individuals who never shared the impression of Menteşe from the start were right with their criticisms on the village guard system just by considering the statement of Menteşe.

k. "State-supported non-governmental organizations": Village guard associations

According to a news published in Gündem newspaper on October 2, 2001 a new association similar to the one that were previously established in Gercüş district of Batman, was founded in Diyarbakır under the name "Sason Village Guards Assistance and Solidarity Association". The president of the association is Fevzi Yalçın, "the village guard, whose name is involved in many executions" and the association has a thousand and four hundred members. The aim of the association in accordance with its by-laws is as follows:

> "Repair and maintenance of the vehicles, materials and instruments that are used by village guards; buying new ones when it is needed. Paying for

> fuel and food costs for exterior duties. Providing every need of the village guards such as repairing and maintenance. Supporting the health expenses by financially helping the wives and relatives of the village guards during the situations such as death, illness and injury. Financial support for the families of the village guards who are martyrs or war veteran. In order to realize the aims above, NGO organizes competitions, conferences, fests, lottery drawings, celebrations and commemorations days which are suitable to the values of Turkish National culture and public morality. It also makes attempts according with the NGO Law No. 2908 for getting expenditure."

The comment of the news was "the village guards that wanted to be dissolved are instead getting organized in order not to be unemployed." This state of getting organized rapidly increased in the following years to the extent that they started to function as a pressure group. The news entitled "State supported Village Guard NGOs" published in Nokta journal for the issue March 1-7, 2007, informs the establishment of Şemdinli Temporary Village Guards Assistance and Solidarity Association in which the opening was done by the District Governor and the Garrison Commander. It is stated that the association has no political aspect and only aims to form a sort of an "inter-professional solidarity" by providing the aid and support to those who are in need with the fees collected from the members. On the other hand, Berivan Tapan the author of the book *Terörün Bekçileri/Hamidiye Alaylarından Günümüze Koruculuk* (2007) states that the appearance of village guard associations can be explained by the "loss of rights" where their aim is not only solidarity, they want to form a third force by getting organized, in other words, they want to move more organized as they serve just like military men and gendarmerie.[15] According to the news, the number of members of these village guard associations, which is a kind of an NGO, is 3 thousand 801, and the number of the village guards is around 81 thousand.

On June 2, 2002, Cumhuriyet newspaper informed that the lifting of the martial law OHAL in Tunceli and Hakkari and the last time it was extended in Diyarbakır and Şırnak are welcomed with great happiness among the people living in the region. The news also included the following sentence of Lawyer Serdar Talay, President of the Migrants Assistance and Solidarity Association (GÖÇ-DER) Diyarbakır Branch:

> "OHAL was lifted but the village guard system should be abolished as well. The rehabilitation of these people is very important."

As a matter of fact, the news entitled "The Village Guards Persisted in State of Emergency" of Gökçer Tahincioğlu which was published in Milliyet on September 29, 2002, provides many examples regarding the crimes –especially the murder of the individuals who returned back to their villages- committed by the village guards in the last three months. Tahincioğlu defines the village guards as "with their numbers close to 70 thousand, they constitute the third biggest armed force in Turkey after military and police, since 1985, 23 thousand of them were suspended from their duties due to various incidents."

On October 3, 2002, it is reported in Cumhuriyet newspaper that the clash happened in Uğrak village, Bismil district of Diyarbakır resulted in death. President of the Human Rights Association Diyarbakır Branch Selahattin Demirtaş claimed that the clash occurred between the people who wanted to return back to their villages and the village guards who did not allow them to enter fearing that it will be against their interest. Demirtaş further expressed that the village guard system which stands as the biggest obstacle in the return back to the villages should be abolished. On July 20, 2002, according to a news of Milliyet, a family who "did not accept to become village guards as they feared the PKK" and was returning back to Nurettin village, Malazgirt district of Muş in which they abandoned back in 1994. On the return, 3 members of the family were killed by the village guards, 20 of the village guards were taken under custody and the weapons of the 60 of them were confiscated.

The village guard report published in Demokrat Bakış newspaper on the issue of July 27, -August 2, 2002 informed that Şırnak was appointed as a pilot region for disarming the village guards and encouraging them to be employed in different areas. In this pilot region, 80 village guards were employed for the primary schools, 21 village guards started working at Turkish Petroleum International Company (TPIC) as security guards. The other news included in the report are; the financial concerns of the village guards regarding their future; the description of village guard system which "provokes the public against each other, heavily damages the trust feelings towards the state, threatens the unitary state structure" in the report prepared by the DYP deputy Salim Ensarioğlu in March 2002; the arguments of the report prepared by Van Yüzüncü Yıl University

in December 2001 stating that the village guards are more devoted to the chief of tribes than to the state and they are involved in the illegal activities such as drug smuggling and gun smuggling. The January 16, 2003 dated issue of Özgür Gündem newspaper covers one more time the information gathered from this news. According to the news of Özgür Gündem; majority of the village guards who showed reactions such as; "we did not become village guards in the first place for being janitors" either refused the job or quitted it after a while. The news again mentions the report of Van Yüzüncü Yıl University while informing that the report was written together with the University and the Gendarme Command of Public Security:

> "It is doubtful that, at this point, village guards who lost their functions will orient towards productive or paid works after they left aside the money they got every month. Whereas village guards gain the understanding of being a government employee, this situation negatively affected their feature of being productive."

According to the headlight news published in Özgür Gündem on September 28, 2002, the leaders of the village guards Hazım Babat and Kamil Atak who wished to be the candidate deputy for the coming general elections on November 3 were rejected by MHP due to their criminal records. It is informed that DYP accepts them however MHP shows three village guards as Şırnak candidates that were involved in bribery and blackmailing incidents. The news also includes the information that Kamil Atak served as Mayor of Cizre of RP and MHP for two periods. On the other hand, according to another news of Özgür Gündem published on January 6, 2003, the village guards were summoned at Gendarme Station Command in Çukurca, Hakkari and were briefed on the notice letter of the Ministry of Internal Affairs which stated that "the village guards who are a member of a political party will resign from their parties". Following the briefing, 140 village guards resigned from all the active political parties in the region except DEHAP, MHP was forced to close down its district office since all the managers were village guards and many parties were left with only district president or even in some cases without a president as well.

The news in Özgür Gündem on November 19, 2003 informs that DEHAP, which accepts the village guard system as an obstacle for maintaining the social peace and works for its abolition, visited the region in order to meet the village

guards and the victims of the village guard system. President of Social Peace Commission Orhan Miroğlu expresses:

> "... In Turkey, the non-governmental organizations and the political parties who side with peace and democracy should discuss the Truth Commissions which are internationally recognized. These commissions, that have the missions for coming to terms with the past and building a democratic future, had a great function in terms of creating a peaceful culture and soothing the social conscience in the countries such as South Africa, Guatemala, Chile, Chad and Uganda."

The news also mentions that there are 58 thousand 511 village guards at 22 cities. The solution proposal of the commission were as follows: disarmament should spread over a period of time, the village guards over 45 should be retired, the village guards under 45 should be supported by social and financial investment projects and the central and local bureaucracy should contribute in this process. It is not surprising that the proposals of the commission were not taken into consideration; however some surprising developments were on the way.

I. Village guards: The obstacle against the return to the villages

According to a news published in Hürriyet on August 27, 2004, the village guards refused to leave Sarıköy, the Assyrian village located in İdil district, Şırnak, in which they were placed back in 1994. Following this, the Governor of Şırnak Osman Güneş stated that the village guards were brought to the village unlawfully by the authorities of the period and added "by the order of the Ministry, I instructed the gendarme to empty the village." The news also included the following expression of Güneş:

> "[Village guards] have no rights to inhabit in this village. Those houses belong to other citizens. Owners want to settle in their own homes. The state has no debt to village guards there. If they are village guards, the state recompenses this."

On the other hand, the village guard leader Mehmet Ali Bulut informs that while he was serving as a village guard in Yayalar village, the Şırnak Governor and İdil District Governor of the period have given a verbal order in order to serve as a village guard in this city. Bulut further expressed that:

> "We do not deserve this. 240 people live in this village. If we evacuate this area, we do not have anywhere to go. If houses are built for us, then we evacuate. We do not have any territorial claim on anybody's land."

The news published in Cumhuriyet newspaper on August 29, 2004 informs that despite all the warning of the authorities starting with the governorate and the housing or material offers, the village guards insist on not leaving Sarıköy. On September 8, 2004, Gündem Newspaper included the interview done with Johann Roumee, Secretary of the Assyrian Associations Federation in Germany. Roumee informed that the Assyrian associations in Europe have sent a letter to the officials of the Republic of Turkey and expressed their demands on the abolition of the village guard system and providing a safe return back to the villages. According to the news of Gündem newspaper on October 15, 2004, The Êzîdîs, who are the ancient owners of Kıvex (Cave) village located in İdil district, Şırnak, have won the legal struggle that they pursued with their lawyers Eren Keskin. As a result, by the order of Idil District Governorate and together with a ceremony, the village was going to be evacuated of village guards and be returned to the previous owners.

The news published in Gündem newspaper on October 4, 2004 informs that, instead of abolishing the village guard, the government is working on rehabilitation of them by decreasing the crime rates of the village guards, being subject to more strict controls and trainings, building their trust to the state and employing the ones who can no longer work as a village guard in other areas. The news also includes the opinions of Dr. Veli Fatih Güven that were published on the latest issue of Strategic Analysis journal of the Center for Euroasian Strategic Studies. Güven affirms in his article, in which he enumerates the benefits of the system, that in case of abolition of the village guard system "both the struggle against the PKK will be endangered and will be fallen under the influence of the organization's propaganda." Güven also expressed that "the agitations of the PKK have an influence on the increase on the crime rates of village guards." The author further argued that due to their age, the village guards consist of "a generation that will be left out of the system by itself" and "despite everything the state should continue its loyal attitude." Güven further added:

> "The state... has to focus on the education which strengthens the senses

> of unity, integrity and fighting against the terror which village guards have already had. It should also try to find the ways for carrying it over the future generations."

Apparently, the village guard system is a regulation that is valued by the pro-statists as much as or even more than the state. In fact, the cost of the village guard system is increasing each other day. In this respect, the village guards were not only a social and political but also a financial burden.

The news published in Gündem newspaper on May 1, 2005 informs that after Nurettin village, Malazgirt, Muş was set on fire by the village guards in 1994, the villagers won the case that they opened against Turkey as the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) convicted Turkey to pay 15 thousand British Pound to the villagers. The state which paid the compensation opened a recourse trial, in order to collect back the compensation, against the village guards who were responsible for the incident. However, no such recourse trial existed against the policemen or gendarmes for similar cases. According to the news of Gündem newspaper on November 11, 2005, a trial that was opened in 1997 against the 10 village guards who were accused of murdering 8 villagers in Midyat, Mardin in 1993, was finalized in 2000 with the release of some of the village guards. The case was re-opened upon the application of the villagers to the ECHR and this time the village guards were sentenced to 25 years of imprisonment.

On the other hand, the news published in Gündem newspaper on June 23, 2006 informs that the Turkish General Staff wants to hold onto the village guards who refused to join the operations and laid down their arms on the excuse of insufficient salary and security they receive in the recent months. In this respect, the General Staff wanted to take precautions via the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Finance, thus started working on a draft law concerning the "right to retirement without paying premiums." On August 18, 2007, Gündem newspaper informed that the village guards were accepted by the Chief of the Turkish General Staff Yaşar Büyükanıt and visited Anıtkabir during a time when the clashes in the region increased. The state wanted to get rid of the village guards but also did not want them to cause new problems. Therefore, the state gives the impression that it tries to "please" the village guards in order to "break up in a civilized manner". However, this does not look like an easy task

as the relations between the state and the village guards were tangled up. The news published in Alternatif newspaper on August 1, 2008 covers the relation between the village guards, confessors, counter-guerrillas and the JITEM that appears in the indictment of the Ergenekon case. According to the information that was written in the indictment; Abdülmuttalip Tonçer was first a PKK militant, then he surrendered himself and was put on trial in DGM but did not receive a sentence since he was a confessor. Tonçer then did his military service in Muş at the gendarme intelligence service and became a village guard after his compulsory military service ended. Tonçer also worked closely with JITEM when he was a confessor.

m. "Bilge village massacre"

The incident which is widely known as Bilge village massacre among the public is about an ongoing blood feud between two families in Mardin that resulted in the killing of 44 people. On May 6, 2009, Cumhuriyet newspaper made a wide coverage of the incident on its ninth page. The news included the statements of the President of the Chamber of Butchers Sait Şanlı, who successfully ended hundreds of blood feud case in Diyarbakır:

> "I also knew that there was hostility between Arı family and Çelebi family. For the first time they bumped into each other in 1992. They became village guards in order to ensure the safety of their lives and carry their guns comfortably. Following that, the other side also became village guards."

According to a news appearing on the same page by Mehmet Faraç, it is expressed that "a massacre was made with the Kalashnikovs given by the state for the sake of the village guard system." The high rank state officials declared the incident as being "inhuman" but none mentioned the question of village guard system. Again on May 6, the news published in Günlük newspaper informs that the high rank state authorities condemned the incident by identifying it as a "custom killing" whereas the opposition parties and representatives of the organization define it as a "village guard killing". The news also included detailed information on how the incident happened. On the same page, Yüksel Genç mentions the incident in his article and argues that the "dominant, nationalist

and orientalist" approach that condemns Kurds by relating all the incidents and murders happened in the region to customs. Genç further expressed that;

> "In the context of this incident, instead of pointing out the village guard system, explaining the situation with the customs and rendering the responsibility of the state invisible is unacceptable."

On May 7, the newspaper made a coverage on the statement of Prof. Dr. Tülin İçli, professor at Hacettepe University Department of Sociology who is well known for her works on custom and honor killings. İçli stated that the attack definitely cannot be defined as a custom killing, as it is a sociological phenomenon yet to be identified.

On May 7, 2009, in his column in Cumhuriyet newspaper, Hikmet Çetinkaya expressed that "the state which created a society of armed tribes" has entrusted Bilge village to homicidal maniacs. While reminding that Mesopotamia and Ionia were once the cradle of history and culture not primitivism and bigotry, Çetinkaya implied the relation between the massacre and the village guard system.

According to another news on the same page, the lands left by the families that emigrated from Bilge village were shared among the village guards staying in the village. The village guards showed reaction to the relatives of the families that support their wish to return back to the village. The article of Mehmet Faraç again on the same page expressed that no matter that they carried primitive and barbaric qualities, the customs and the feudal structures also contain within themselves a series of moral values that brings the public together and paves the way to peace. Faraç further stated that the scenes of shooting the ones praying, children, women and pregnant, and raiding the wedding and funeral homes as seen during Bilge village massacre are unaccepted:

> "The ones who cold-heartedly killed 44 people in Mardin spilled blood so recklessly due to the absence of a strong tribe that will stand against them."

Faraç affirms that this massacre, which is covered as a primitive and barbaric action by the media, cannot be just interpreted that it is due to the traditional structure of the Kurdish people. He further urges to abandon the

mentality that sees the village guard system and the tribes as ballot boxes. It is evident that both of the practices which provide arms and political power to the tribes are also empowering the tribes to the degree that they use physical violence against each other and the groups they rule over. The state is leaving the groups exposed to violence and poverty without proposing a modern, social and economic organization that may replace the traditional structure that the tribes are resting on.

Another news published in Cumhuriyet newspaper on May 8, 2009 included the claims that the dispute which resulted in the massacre was due to "forbidden love" or "sharing the income of the illegal drug trafficking". The two families own common fields and have been sharing the income of illegal drug harvests. As a result of a recent land survey, their land was unequally shared between the two families and this gave birth to the dispute. Another news appearing on the same page provides the statement of the Deputy Prime Minister Cemil Çiçek:

> "We have to evaluate the issue considering multiple aspects instead of being in haste and evaluating it after such an incident... If a reform is necessary, then it can be done. If it has to be abolished, then it can be abolished, it is a different issue."

He was not reminded that the disadvantages of the issue were evaluated for a long time, like approximately thirty years, while "considering multiple aspects" by the deputies "sitting" in the Assembly chairs. He was also not reminded that numerous reports were prepared by various commissions and countless speeches were made at the Assembly during which it was asserted that the village guard system should be abolished, not reformed. On the same day, according to a news of Günlük newspaper, after the incident 26 village guards in Van returned back their weapons stating that "we were ashamed of ourselves". On May 9, same newspaper reported the statement of the President of the Communication Department of the Turkish General Staff Metin Gürak which expressed while referring to the incident in Mardin that "by creating a link between the village guard system, holding all the village guards or the village guard system as an institution responsible of the incident, in our opinion, is a prejudiced and wrong practice." What Gürak seems to miss is that the ones held responsible for this massacre is not all of the village guards, but the village guard system itself

which he also emphasized by defining it an "institution".

On May 11, 2009 Günlük newspaper included an interview done by Yüksel Genç with Ass.Prof. Dr. Nazan Üstündağ of Boğaziçi University Department of Sociology. Üstündağ informed that there is no "term like village guard system" and the village guard system is in fact what the world calls "paramilitary force". She further added:

> "In Turkey, the paramilitary structures were called 'village guards' and under the name of village guard system this paramilitary entity was established and has gone through a process of legitimatization. However, in world literature, the arming of the civilians by the state is called paramilitarism. And this is against all the laws of the world."

Üstündağ claimed that the incident that happened in Mardin cannot be explained with custom or education problems. She expressed that:

> "Everybody knows that it is a violence which differs from the custom. The custom has its own rules and its own understanding of morality. It has mechanisms to create and solve the problems... I can give you many examples which is defined as custom killings just like this case. None of them are custom killings. These are the symptoms revealed by the war, violence, torture and oppression that Kurdish region experienced for decades. When it is about massacring, the educated ones know better. As Tayyip Erdoğan said, 'you know killing the children well'. I wonder whether the ones killed people in Israel were uneducated?"

On August 3, 2009 the results of the report prepared by the Lifelong Education and Development Association along with 22 scientists were shared in an article published in Cumhuriyet newspaper:

> "The incident has nothing to do with the customs. As the majority of the people who investigated the incident reported; financial interests, power conflicts and some problems caused by the system triggered the event... Having the instruments of violence or accessing them easily facilitate the acts of violence. In this incident, all the perpetrators are male village guards and have guns. What happened in this village can be interpreted as the explosion of an accumulated rage of the region."
>
> It can be understood that the state and government officials did not take

this report into consideration, just as they did with the previous similar reports, from a news published on June 2, 2009: According to the news, in Tunceli a total of 200, in Pülümür District 27, where 3 of them are women, new village guards were given their employment cards with a ceremony.

n. The "history" of the village guard system: Unsolved murder, rape, crime; fear, conscience, peace

On March 6, 2010, Günlük newspaper reports the trial of 7 defendants, among them is the JITEM Group Commander Albay Cemal Temizöz regarding their responsibility for the 52 unsolved murders that happened in Cizre district of Şırnak between the years 1993-1995. During the trial at Diyarbakır 6th High Criminal Court, one of the defendants, leader of the village guards Kamil Atak, threatened the eye-witnesses and the relatives of the victims who testified against him with the following sentence:

> "My son's name is History (Tarih). History will write the history, nobody should give a statement that comfortably."

A similar attitude can be seen in some high rank state officials. On March 16, 2010, Günlük newspaper reported the speech of the Chief of General Staff İlker Başbuğ in the Global Terrorism and International Cooperation Symposium where he stated that the abolition of the village guard system is wrong as it would serve the aims of the organization. Başbuğ further claimed that this system which is successfully in practice for many years, is now adopted by the USA in which a similar system was in practice in Iraq since 2007 and another one will be implemented in Afghanistan in the near future. The examples given by Başbuğ and how "successful" they turned out just like the case in Turkey indeed was clearly understood in time by everyone. Başbuğ also affirmed that in his opinion, it was not right to abolish the village guard system for the mistakes of "a few" people. These "mistakes" of the village guard system were covered during the confessions of a village guard published on February 27, 2010 in Günlük newspaper. The news reports that Ethem Seyhan who was a village guard at Nusaybin between the years 1990-1998, together with the station commander and the leader of the village guards of the period, were involved in the setting

fire on more than 20 villages, torturing the villagers so that they will become village guards, murdering numerous civilians and blaming all these events on the PKK.

According to the news published in Günlük newspaper on June 12, 2010 the cultivated lands of the villagers living in Derinsu village, Derik district of Mardin, were set on fire by the village guards and houses were constructed on these lands. The claimant villagers inform that they filed a complaint against the village guards last year due to similar reasons; however the village guards that were interrogated at the station were released and threatened the villagers for abandoning their private lands. On June 14, 2010, the newspaper reports that in addition to the harassment and rape incidents committed by public officers, military men and village guards in Mardin, Siirt, Van, Hakkari, Ağrı, Kars and Dersim a new incident in Diyarbakır happened. According to the news, a 15 years old female child, whose father is a village guard wrote a letter telling that she was raped by six village guards who were her relatives and a hospital employer for 3 years, the rape attempts of other individuals including the station commander and she is 5 months old pregnant. As the girl was afraid, she did not file an official complaint against the perpetrators and when the father applied to the prosecutor's office on behalf of his daughter, they tried to talk him out of it. The father further stated that:

> "I expect nothing from the state. I will no longer be a village guard... The ones who raped my daughter now threaten me. I explained the situation to the authorities. They took my gun due to security measures. However, they did not touch the guns of the people who threatened me."

On June 18, 2010 Günlük newspaper reported that 103 village guards resigned who were sent to the operations outside their villages and appointed to guard the borderlines by force. Some of the village guards withdrew their resignation on the condition that they will stay in their villages. According to the news on June 21, 2010, the village guards of Kırıkdağ village, Hakkari, refused the duties assigned by the military authorities due to the fear that they will be shot by the military men on duty like the case of Şemdinli that recently happened in which the village guards were shot by the military men. According to a news published on July 10, 2010 in Günlük newspaper, 60 village guard from Narlı village, Çatak district of Van, laid down their arms as a reaction to the death of

a guerrilla, who was from the village that they were assigned to, during a clash in Beytüşşebap, Şırnak. The news included the expressions of a village guard:

> "In our village 15 young people joined the PKK until today. 4 people died during the clashes. This creates a discomfort on the conscience of the villagers and the village guards. In the village, village guards and the ones on the mountains are all relatives."

Moreover, the news also informs that the village guards do not want to join the operations, remain inactive due to the fact that they do not have enough power to fight back against the assaults and also in some operations the soldiers open fire at them and will blame the PKK for the possible death casualties. According to a news published on October 8, 2010 in Günlük newspaper, the state initiated a new village guard system in the region following the recent incidents that village guards altogether laid down their arms in the region and the Jirki tribe who has thousands of village guards announced that they will no longer fight against the PKK. The news based on the statements of the eye-witnesses further informs that the individuals who failed at substitute teacher exams are offered civil servant status provided that they accept to become village guards.

On February 8, 2011 Günlük newspaper informs that a new duty was assigned to the village guards. Former president of the Institute of Forensic Medicine and the President of the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TIHV) Prof. Şebnem Korur Fincancı stated that digging the mass graves with a scoop is "embarrassing" and forensics experts, lawyers, anthropologists and archaeologists should absolutely be present during the diggings. On the same page is the news of Zeynep Kuray. According to Kuray's news, Bitlis Human Rights Association representatives claimed that the Prosecutor stated that while they were there, the prosecutor himself will not conduct the mass grave diggings in Mutki district and thus made the village guards do the diggings. On March 10, 2011, it is reported with the decision of the Cabinet 2007 dated and numbered 13065, it was decided that the village guard system would be bolstered. The governorships recruited 10 thousand new village guards upon the arrival of a notice. Since the applications for becoming a village guard were lower than the expected number, new announcements were made under different names, for instance, when the people in Bismil, Diyarbakır, applied to the position which is described as; "security guards who" will be employed in order to ensure the

security of the BOTAŞ pipeline, found out that the job is being a village guard.

The most recent news regarding the village guards is the support they show for the peace meetings which is known as Imralı process by the public opinion that has been ongoing for some time. Temporary Village Guards and Martyr's Families Federation General Coordinator Ata Altın expresses that:

> "We, as the village guards and their families, support all attempts done with good intentions in order to cease the fire, stop spilled blood and prevent the deaths. However, we witnessed in the past several good-intentioned attempts having no strong, concrete grounds and this situation raised the expectations of the terrorist organization and its supporters. Because of this, we approach cautiously yet optimistically to such agreement processes. We are cautious because of our past experiences. We are optimistic because we believe that the time has come for Turkey to live together fraternally."[16]

Considering that a similar declaration was done back in 1996 in Van by the Şimşekler Battalion Commander and the President of Van Temporary Village Guards and Martyr's Families Associarion Ayhan Kahraman, as it was broadcasted by CNN Turk on January 12, 2013, it can be concluded that the village guards are willing to take part as a political actor rather than an armed force and advocating for peace instead of war.[17] As a matter of fact, on March 27, 2013, Türkiye newspaper included an interview done with the leader of the village guard of Bayraktepe village, Siirt and the President of Siirt Veterans and Martyrs Federation Kenan Şehitoğlu. Şehitoğlu's following statement manifests the eagerness of the village guards in supporting the peace process:

> "The ones who do not approach positively to this peace attempt means that something is wrong with their beliefs and conscience. They definitely did not get their share of the humanity. The ones who want the war and clashes to continue are the real traitors indeed. You cannot achieve this only by saying 'I am a nationalist, I am a patriot.' Sooner or later, some steps need to be taken. Patriotism, loving the flag and nationalism are not realized with words."

According to a news published on April 8, 2013 in Hürriyet newspaper, the village guards who became a civilian army with their number of 48 thousand, even 70 thousand including the voluntary village guards, are supporting the

"peace" process on one hand, on the other hand expressing their concerns regarding the blood feud and stating "The state and the PKK are reconciling. What about us? We will not lay down weapons until PKK do so." The news includes the statement of the leader of the village guard of Tepealtı village, Nusaybin district of Mardin, Adnan Durak:

> "I cannot say 'forgive us' by visiting each relative of the killed people. The state has to consider this. The son of a man died in the mountain, and he knows that we were in the military operation on that day. So, he sees us as the reason. Well, suppose that the peace has come. The PKK and the state came into agreement. It is Ok, but they should also reconcile us with the opposing side. What will happen to us?"

It is clear that the concerns of the village guards will be an important element of the transitional justice period which not only values the reconciliation of the nations with each other, but also the reconciliation of one nation with itself.

o. Evaluation

It is possible to categorize the news regarding the village guard system under a few titles: The oppression of the village guards on the people in order to earn the respect of the state, to gain prestige with the war against PKK or in order to force the villagers to become village guards; the crimes such as smuggling, rape, murder committed by the village guards; the difficulties faced by the village guards that are stuck between the state and the PKK; the emigrations that are caused by the village guards in which the ones refusing to become village guards were the victims; the statements pointing to the damages of the village guard system and demanding its abolition; the discourses that verbalize the demands on the improvement of the conditions of the village guards and the information proving that the village guards are in collaboration with the state and the gangs.

The question of village guard system appears in mainstream newspapers only when the state prepares a new regulation for the system or when the scope of the incident in which the village guards were involved is too big to be overlooked or when a significant event happened between the village guards and the PKK or the village guards and the state. It is also hard to say that the

columnists of these newspapers, except than a few exceptions, have a special interest and a critical approach in this matter. In the dissident newspapers and journals that are closer to the Kurdish people and nourished from the region, it is possible to run into mainly negative news regarding the village guards almost every day, especially during the 1990s. The analyses included in the news and the detailed files on the subject give a chance to the readers for fully analyzing the issue and reaching to the details of the news appearing in the mainstream media.

The monstrous portrait of the village guards based on the actions and discourses of some of the chief of tribes "working" as the head of the village guards, is worn out with each news on the situation of villagers that are caught "between two fires" and the conversations done with the village guards. It is also possible to claim that the state has an arbitrary domination over the village guards as it sometimes covers the traces of the crimes committed by the village guards or sometimes punishes them disproportionally. This situation is just adding fuel to the fire. When the people who were coerced into becoming a village guard cannot use guns "appropriately" or when they want to return back their guns, this constitutes a crime. Or the ones who are adept at using a gun either become the target of the PKK or were "sent to the frontlines during the operations" or got included in the illegal activities in which they were not taken care of. The politicians who also take the advantage of the chief of the tribes and the village guards, are caught in a web which they cannot escape even if they want to. Same state of feeling trapped is also valid for the village guards who first become the target of the PKK then pardoned for their actions.

On the other hand, considering the village guards as a homogeneous group which has one common political opinion and identity, same financial situation and social privileges leads to deceptive generalizations and disregarding the important details vital for comprehending the process as a whole. Especially the financial and traditional inequality between the leaders of the village guards and the village guards, in other words, not understanding the different motives of becoming a village guard for the leaders, elders and the chiefs of the tribes on one side and the landless peasants on other side will render the situation of the village guards to be used for the service of difference political discourses. While holding the same concern, it should be concluded that the difference between the historical, political and ideological tendencies –thus the different

Kurdish identities- of the leaders of the village guards, in other words the leaders, elders and the chiefs of the tribes and the peasants is the main element in choosing whether to serve as a village guard or not. In this respect, basically and constantly defining the village guards as the collaborators serving the state presents us a considerably narrow point of view. It is quite possible to see the village guards as individuals having many identities and belongings, who became village guards for different reasons, in different times and continued their duties for different time periods; who sometimes benefited from opportunities arising from the relations with the relatives and sometimes used these opportunities to the detriment of state's hegemony, and sometimes became the victims of the political powers that took advantage of these relations for strategic purposes.

Notes

[1]At a meeting on December 16, 1993, SHP MP Muzaffer Arıkan stated that in the 1994 budget, the figure allocated to the services of village guards was 2 trillion 760 billion Turkish Liras, which corresponded to about half of the budget of the Ministry of Interior, 6 trillion 685 billion 800 million, 41.28% to be precise.

[2]The sum of net minimum wages in 2002 was 222 billion Turkish Liras.

[3]The accepted regulations that passed into a law can be seen in Annex 1

[4]The justification for this modification is as follows: "The objective of this proposal is to provide job opportunities at public institutions and the private sector for the spouses, children or siblings of those voluntary village guards who are killed in action during combat against terror or were disabled and unable to work."

[5]The names of the places are used as they appeared in the sources. Same is valid for the names of the tribes and the family names.

[6]The Ottoman term "Pasha" is used in contemporary Turkey as an honorific title for males, generally with a military connotation. TN

[7]The news draws the attention to another curious point stated in the report: "Another dangerous ascent in the region that is mentioned in the report is the attempt of the state benefitting from the individuals who are confessors. The fact that these confessors are accommodated in Diyarbakır Police Housings creates another problem that is also mentioned in the commission report by these criticisms: 'These individuals whom the state is supposed to use against the organization and gain success, these people used the state and committed many crimes such as burglary, theft and similar crimes while leaning their back on the state.'"

[8]During an interview published on Yeni Aktüel journal, February 1-8 2007, issue 82, Tapan expressed the following: "The most important common point between Hamidiye and village guard system is that both of them consist of tribes. Hamidiye Cavalries were composed of more problematic tribes that frequently caused mutiny. At the present time, the village guards are mainly selected among the individuals who commit crimes... Their murder weapons are now the guns distributed by the state for the fight against terrorism. Just like the case of Hamidiye Cavalries, the village guards are also generally on the agenda with the crimes they committed, especially during the times when the clashes cease, a drastic increase in the crimes committed by the village guards occurs. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, since the implementation of the system on 1985 until September 2005, 4973 village guards got involved in a crime. By the end of 2006, there were approximately 900 village guards in the prisons due to terror, drug and gun smuggling and other crimes. The village guards are mostly involved in and convicted of the crime 'aiding the terrorist organization'... the second accusation is giving the guns distributed by the state to the PKK. This is not the only type of crime that the village guards are involved in, it is impossible to make a classification of the crimes they committed; terror, drug and gun smuggling, rape, murder, fraud..."

[9]See:http://www.marksist.org/haberler/9428-imrali-surecine-korucular-da-destek-verdi. [January 28, 2013]

[10]See:http://tvarsivi.com/vanli-korucular-da-terorle-mucadeleye-destek-verdiler-ayhan-kahraman-artik-bu-kan-akmasin-diye-acikl-12-01-2013-izle-i_2013010366982.html. [January 28, 2013]

IV. AN OVERVIEW OF VILLAGE GUARD SYSTEM FROM INSIDE: EXPERIENCES AND DEMANDS OF THE VILLAGE GUARDS, THEIR WIVES AND CHILDREN / Şemsa ÖZAR

The field research is based on the interviews with current temporary and voluntary village guards, their families (wives and children) and former village guards who quit by their own will, were forced to quit or were retired.

A coordinator and two researchers; a female and a male sociologist carried out the research. Interviews started on August 12, 2011 and ended around the end of October 2011. During this period, a total of 68 interviews were conducted in the city centers, districts and villages of Diyarbakır, Hakkari, Mardin, Şanlıurfa and Van. 33 of these interviews were with village guards and heads of village guards, 15 were with the wives of the guards, 11 were with their children, 3 were with the retired ones, 4 were with the board members of the Temporary Village Guards Assistance and Solidarity Associations and 2 were with the voluntary village guards.

During the preparation phase of the field research, interviews were planned to be carried out among the village guards of the villages of the counties of the predetermined provinces. However, after the field research started it was anticipated that insisting on the predetermined locations would result in a loss of time and hinder the research. Ongoing clashes in the region and the delicacy of the situation made it impossible to carry out interviews at all the pre-planned locations. Therefore, at the beginning only locations where a contact would be available were chosen. Persons who could provide a reference for the places to be visited were determined and appointments for the interviews were made with their help. References for the appointments were decided by personal and institutional connections of DISA members and the field research coordinator.

The interviews were made in places chosen by the village guards, mostly their own villages, face to face and as a daytrip. Interviews which involved more than one person were also made. Although it was requested to interview the wives and children of the village guards, this was only partially achieved. Interviews with women were made by the female researcher. The interviews were made in Turkish or Kurdish, depending on the language of choice of the village guards and were recorded mostly with a sound recorder with their consent.

Interviews with the ones who did not want the sound recorder were taken as notes.

As much care as possible was taken to conduct the interviews as a casual conversation. However, in order not to forget certain important topics, some questions were prepared *a priori* with the purpose of guiding the researcher. Although some of the interviewees were careful and reluctant in talking despite the briefing on the purpose and scope of the research, people sharing their thoughts without hesitation were the majority. On the other hand, we are certainly aware of the fact that information on some "delicate" matters was never mentioned. In this chapter, the interviewees were indicated by numbers in the quotations from the interviews and their cities and counties (if large enough) were stated but not their villages, in order to prevent the disclosure of their identities.

When analyzing the current study, it should be kept in mind that the answers given to our questions change depending on the referenced people. For example; while the interviewees found by references known or thought to be connected with the state/government mostly express problems related to the state and the expectations from it, in the places found by civilian references or by our own measures the social/regional/ethnic problems were pointed out. Without a doubt this was expected from the beginning. For this reason the interviews were tried to be made as versatile as possible, however despite all the efforts, traces of unilaterality is occurring in this research.

The following sections where the outcomes of the field research will be displayed will start with the villagers' own story of becoming a village guard. Presenting the variety of ways for accepting/imposing the village guard system gives us the chance to decrypt the state's attitude in the process of creating the system and turning it into an institutive entity. Also, these stories reflect the ways how the village guards are connected to the system and their expectations from this system.

After the introduction, how the village guards and their families perceive the program is presented in the second section. We have already seen from the statements of the government officials in the section, "*Village guard system in press",* how the state created the village guard system not only for security reasons, but to serve the purpose of drawing the Kurdish villagers to their side. When looked from the "taking sides" point of view, it explains how the village

guards see what they do, how they perceive their relationship with the state – especially the military-, their ways of interpreting the pecking order and where they see themselves in it and decide on which side they are on.

In the third section, how the village guard system transforms the human relations and the daily life is pointed out. Changing and transforming social relations are not restricted to the relations of village guards with other village guards, non-village guards and the authorities but also include the relations of the families and relatives of the village guards. Therefore, the testimonies of the wives and children of the village guards were especially investigated in this section.

Village guard system also appears before us as a system with a great economical aspect. For this reason in the fourth section, various sides of the economical aspect of the system are investigated. In this section, opinions of the villagers who were almost totally broken off from agriculture by accepting the village guard system on the transformations of their lives and the level of income and personnel rights of the village guards are conveyed.

The news reported in the section "*Village guard system at press*" of this book and in the chapter, *Discussions taking place at the Grand National Assembly of Turkey regarding the village guard system,* although the answers given to the motions in the National Assembly and quotations from the commission reports shed light on only the visible part of the iceberg of the illegal actions taken and crimes committed by the village guards, we are aware how long this list of crimes and illegal actions is. In part five, we will observe how this issue is reflected on the village guards' testimonies. By all means, we did not expect the village guards to openly express the crimes they were accused of committing or proven by the court. Nonetheless, the stories of the interviewees mentioning the actions of other village guards demonstratre that there is a considerable amount of criminal activity.

Perhaps the subject of most interest in these days is the abolition of the village guard system in the *Solution Process* we are currently in. Lastly, we asked their opinions on this issue during our field research.

1. How did the village guard system commence?

a. Taking up arms for the first time

> *One of the chiefs of this tribe was a soldier killer But considering the conditions back then, we had to make the tribes side with our state instead of fighting against them. We overlooked some wrongdoings. In a struggle like this, we have to evaluate the ups and downs. This is what we have done in the Southeast.*
>
> Korkut Eken, Star newspaper, October 26, 2002

Since the enacting of the village guard system in 1985, the state has resorted to numerous ways for the employment of village guards. One of these methods is to negotiate with the tribe leaders for the whole tribe to become village guards. In order to achieve this, the "pro-state" or "anti-state" position of the tribes that existed since the Ottoman era was taken advantage of. In addition to this, as in the establishment of Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments, tribes with the highest crime rate were preferred.[1]

Army officers in the rank of general or governors and heads of districts came to an agreement in return of a certain benefit with tribal leaders for turning the whole tribe into a "village guard tribe". This method begins with the Jirki tribe, who were the first to accept the village guard system. In the May of 1985, the following day of the meeting between the government officials and Jirki tribe leaders in the house of the village headman of the Aşağıdere village (Beytüşşabap), Jirki tribe chief Tahir Adıyaman and Hacı Ömer, Abubekir Aydemir and Kökel Özdemir were brought to Diyarbakır 7th Army Corps headquarters with helicopters and accepted the duty of village guardship after a meeting with Army Corps Lieutenant General Kaya Yazgan.[2] During this ceremony-like acceptance Lieutenant General Yazgan makes the members of the tribe swear upon *üçtaş*[3] with their hands on Qur'an that they will remain loyal to the state.[4] Thus the first village guards start to work in Hakkari, the city where PKK made its first action.

While the aforementioned members of Jirki tribe were sought for crimes like arms smuggling, murder, woman abduction and land seizure, they avoided the prosecution with a new ruling added to the Law of Criminal Procedure,

which states that an investigation can continue without the requirement of the suspect turning in[5].

Another way used in order to recruit village guards is the villagers who voluntarily become guards to use the power of the state against the PKK or their personal enemies. Another method which resulted in deaths is the use of force by gendarmeries on villagers to become village guards. Threats by gendarmerie include burning and evacuating the villages. The perception of the village guards on this issue is strongly influenced by their affiliation with this system and whether they became village guards willingly or by force. Those who voluntarily became guards embraces the system and side with the state while the ones forced to become guards usually talks about the errors of this system.

When investigated chronologically, during the first years of the system a rewarding method was rather preferred. For the tribe leaders, this reward was their vindication and for poor villagers this reward was a promise of a monthly salary. Military and civilian authorities tried to increase the number of guards by explaining to villagers that the village guard system is like being a watchman and they will be paid for only guarding their own village. Since the beginning of 1990s an oppressive practice became prevalent, the villages of the individuals who refused to become village guards were evacuated and set on fire in which they were subjected to beatings, torture and massacre. Those who still insisted on not becoming village guards were obliged to abandon their villages.

b. Gendarmerie oppression and not being able to abandon village

> *We became village guards so as not to abandon our village, crops and animals.*
>
> Village guard 7, Van

For villagers who refused the village guard system, gendarmerie used oppressive methods and imposed either joining them or evacuation of their villages. Villagers were left with two options; either they were going to arm or leave.

> I became a village guard in 1988 but the system began in the village in 1994. The village guard system progressed like this; One day we heard that head of district was coming to the village. It was a Friday; we were

> just finished with prayers and there were soldiers everywhere. They told us either we would become village guards or leave the village with only our jackets and nothing else. *Village guard 1, Kulp*

In this process of acceptance/refusal of the village guard system, state's discourse twists into "those who are not with us are our enemies" and those who refused to become village guards were treated like a member of the PKK.

> The main reason of us becoming village guards was the state's oppression. They came on a holiday and told us that we were going to join the village guards. They even declared us as terrorists. The soldiers were ordered to shoot anyone who stays. "Either you join the guards or leave", so we summoned a car and started packing for migration. Seeing this, this time they said "Oh come on, don't leave, here have a weapon", and my uncle said "Okay but you will give weapons to everyone or else none of us will get". *Village guard 2, Van*

Main reason of the village evacuations and the burnings in the 1990s was the villagers refusing to join the guards.[6] There was no other option than migration for villagers who did not want to draw a gun on their own people.

> Most of our relatives abandoned here because of the incidents which occured in the 1990's. They went to cities like Adana and Diyarbakır; our tribe fell apart and those who stayed became village guards. *Village guard 3, Lice*

A lot of Kurdish villagers who refused to become a village guard in the 1980's and the 1990's were struggling to earn a living and security of life, stuck between poverty and government oppresion. Wife of one of the village guards puts the pressure and the despair into words like this:

> We had gone through much worse things a decade ago. They said those who are not village guards are not allowed to stay in the village. Everything we had was in the village; how could we ever leave, where could we go without any of our stuff? Back then they told us we could not bring anything with us if we refuse to become a village guard and leave. Thus, unwillingly, we became village guards. There is no single good thing about being a village guard. *Wife of a village guard 2, Kulp*

A lot of poor villagers could not risk being miserable while migrating with

their children and yielded to the pressure of the military, whereas some of them left their villages in order to avoid becoming village guards.

> Ali Öz was a lieutenant appointed to our village in 1997. Now he is on trial in "Ergenekon" case. He came to our village back then; our village did not want to become village guards. Ali Öz put pressure on our village and told us that we were going to become village guards. What could the villager have done? They were helpless and poor. 10 children in each house; not educated, ignorant. No chance of migrating. That's why we became guards; not voluntarily. *Village guard 4, Van*

In the village guards' statements, the despair of getting arms for the first time is frequently pointed out. Back then, some of the men left the villages in order to work in the metropolitan cities. When gendarmerie started to put pressure on villagers to become village guards, these men were forced to return back to their villages. Since it was impossible for all of the family to migrate because of their large number, they became village guards to protect their families.

> The reason was not financial; we had no other chance than becoming a village guard. Where was I supposed to go? I had 12 children; what could we have done, where could we have migrated? What can I do all by myself, I was desperate... So we returned back to the village. As soon as we arrived, gendarmerie stopped us. For two hours, Sergeant urged me to get armed. This is not me, I am not suitable for this, I am a social democrat; I am always on the side of the oppressed ones, not only Kurds. *Village Guard 4, Van*

Cases where villages did not succumb to gendarmerie oppression and refused to become village guards are also present. These villages first resisted and thus process of becoming village guards took longer. As gendarmerie increased the oppression, there is only one choice left for villagers who were too poor to migrate; that is to become a village guard.

> They caused nuisance, put pressure in 1990 and made us village guards by using force. "Either you will become village guards or leave your village" is what they said. Economy was very weak, everyone was miserable; we couldn't do it. I was in Mersin in 1987, and returned in 1990. I had 11 children but no Money in my pocket. Even so I tried to hold on for a year

and worked. Then military increased its pressure on us and said "Either you will become village guards or leave your village". We had no other choice. *Village guard 4, Van*

c. Misinformation – Being a watchman

I started in first month of 1993. I used to be a peddler in Istanbul. We were poor and become village guards out of poverty. They told us to return to our village; we would be on a payroll. It will be like being a watchman in your village.

Village guard 5, Mardin

From the statements of the village guards, it turns out that village guards did not know what was expected from them; all they knew was that they would be patrolling in their own village and around BOTAŞ oil pipelines with weapons.

I was 45 when I first started and worked as a village guard for 20 years. I am 70 now. At first we became village guards to protect the oil wells of BOTAŞ7. Our village headman told us that the battalion commander asked for a few village guards from him. He was kind of a cousin, so he said "OK" and some became village guards. But when the battalion commander came again asking for another 15 village guards 15 days later, I told him that there was something fishy about this. I told him to quit this. But he said "No, I am going to do this and enlist my relatives" and wrote 20 names from his family. Then we said "Well, they became village guards, so I might as well become one." and joined the village guards. *Village guard 6, Mardin*

Wives and children of the village guards also say that their husbands and fathers were misinformed during the recruitment. The widespread use of the statement of being misinformed, right or wrong, indicates that the village guards talk and argue about this matter. This appears before us especially as a statement style of a group who cannot totally accept or defend the village guard system.

A wife of a village guard states his husband became a village guard to work as a watchman and not as a force against PKK as follows:

My husband has been working as a village guard for 25 years... They said at first it was as a watchman and nothing else, not for outsiders. *Wife of a village guard 1, Mardin*

Similarly a child of a village guard explains how his became a guard because of misinformation and family pressure:

> I don't say anything to my father about him being a village guard. He can't quit now; if he does we will starve. He does not have any other job or anything... Being a village guard is the only job he has. He used to work in a municipality located in Istanbul but then my grandfather called him back and so he came. First they told him that the BOTAŞ pipeline was there and he will be watching it; they will give him a lot of money, nearby his house. Despite all this, my father insisted on not coming but my grandfather forced him to, saying "I will not forgive you", and so he came. First he was recruited as a watchman, a job with high salary. 4 to 5 years later they became village guards. *Village guard child 1, Mardin*

d. Poverty and family ties

> *Actually we were caught in the middle and our children ask why we chose to become village guards, but poverty left us no choice and we had no idea that things were going to turn out like this.*
>
> *Village guard 5, Mardin*

> *When I return to the village if I fail to find another job or profession and get married on top of it, I might have to become a village guard as well. This won't be my choice but will be because of necessity.*
>
> *Village guard child 2, Mardin*

> *Village guard system is now considered as a way of making a living. At least people can live by with the salary.*
>
> *Daughter of a village guard 3, Lice*

Poverty and problems with making a living is frequently expressed as a reason to become a village guard. It is well known fact how serious and widespread poverty in Kurdistan is. The depth of poverty in this area is partially a result of agriculture and husbandry policies of governments that impoverishes the small producer and security policies carried out in the region. Meadow bannings and food embargoes practiced for a long time to prevent people from supporting PKK results in the difficulty of fulfilling the most basic needs in villages.[8]

> If I had trouble of making a living today, if I suffered fron hunger, I would be a village guard again, but if I had some money, I would never be a village guard. *Village guard 9, Mardin*

On the other hand, to be armed against his fellowmen, which is a fact hard to defend, may force these people to say that they did not accept this duty willingly, but because of poverty. A kid from the same village of the village guard of the quotation above tells the reason of his father's becoming a village guard as follows:

> Before my father became a village guard we had bigger financial issues, but I don't remember becoming a village guard. I was born in 1993 and my father became a village guard in 1992. The entire village became village guards due to financial problems; otherwise no one would be a village guard. *Village guard child 4, Mardin*

This time, we listen the relation between the village guard system and a family from a daughter of a village guard. She states how the relationship between village guard system and poverty turns the job into "family profession":

> I work in the carpet business and my father was a village guard even before I was born. The thing that affected me the most was when my father joined the operations as a village guard. What if he never comes back? My father passed away due to an illness. After that, my uncle started taking care of our family but he could only afford to take care of his own; the village guard salary was not high. So they tried to convince my mother to become a village guard, so she could take care of our family. So my mother was made to become a village guard in order to get the salary. She is 36 years old and never went to school. In other words, she became a village guard due to financial problems and to take care of the family. She also has a weapon but she never takes part in any mission... I am happy that my mother is a village guard because we are relieved now. If the village guard system is to be abolished it will be bad because nevertheless people are living by with its salary. *Daughter of a village guard 5, Lice (both parents village guards; father deceased)*

Although the village guard system is a practice that covers men, according to information taken from Temporary Village Guard Associations, in different regions, there are 35 to 40 women temporary village guards in total. Women village guards are employed and armed as a temporary village guard when her

husband passes away as a village guard. However other village guards undertake her job; they do not join missions like operations and shifts. Within the knowledge of civilian and military authorites of districts and police stations, this is practiced so they can get a salary in the place of their husbands.

e. Arming against the PKK

> *My father, uncle and brother were killed by the PKK This is the main reason for me to become a village guard.*
>
> Village guard 10, Kızıltepe

The bloody events between certain tribes and PKK during the first years of PKK rebellion, the attitude of PKK towards tribe leaders and families resulted in transformations of tribes which where already labeled as "on the side of the state" into "village guard tribes". Village guard system allowed tribes to access weapons by legal means and gave the chance for state to overlook illegal doings that the tribe was involved. Village guards who are a member of a tribe, on the other hand, emphasize that unlike poor villagers who became village guards due to financial problems, their tribes chose to be village guards in order to stand against PKK attacks.

> For example we did not have any financial problems. We did not need the village guard salary thus we did not become village guards for money. As a family perhaps we can feed 500 people. We have a land of 12 thousand km2. The "Apoists"9 did this. They thought that killing the family elders would force the rest of the tribe to surrender. So they killed this and that leader. After that we had no choice. There were big punishments for obtaining guns by ourselves and we had no other choice than getting armed. It would be tough to leave our village and go away. How could we ever leave our lands? That's why we had to become village guards. Simply put, things got worse while we were trying to fix it. We were landlords and rich. But we came in under the command of a specialist sergeant. We didn't know what to do. *Village guard 11, Kızıltepe*

Tribes who had problems with PKK and wanted to defend themselves chose to become village guards because arming independently in those times would result in a lot of problems with the state.

> I am a member of the ...Tribe. During those days the ...Tribe was with PKK, with the son of the leader of that tribe. They slaughtered three of them. Not with guns, but with ropes and daggers. Their dead bodies were left in the mountain for a week in July. After that incident Yusuf Sayhoş, who was the Gendarmerie Brigadier at the time, Adnan Berendereli, the Governor of Van and Halit Paymancıoğlu, the State of Emergency Governor passed a law for the tribes and said arm and defend your village. This is how I got my gun back then. *Village guard 12, battalion commander, Van*

Some villagers who are not a member of a tribe state that they became village guards in order to protect their village from the PKK and prevent their children being abducted by them. A wife of a villager tells her husband's story of becoming a village guard:

> The reason why my husband became a village guard was not financial at all; believe me, it wasn't. Everyone was financially well. It was because of the raids; main reason was the organization's pressure. Let it be known so, and it was really like that. Before we became village guards, terrorists would come every single day; not to attack but they had all kinds of demands. They would abduct someone every day, never to return. Some people from the village left like that and never came back. At this rate this will be end of us, we thought. Each day one of us was next, so we said we should grab our weapons and respond; if we were going to die, it would better die fighting. So we armed ourselves. Arming ourselves made things worse because we became targets for terrorists, but we weren't weak now and we could strike back... We have been at ease a little since 2000. I think it was a general internal decision of the organization. There were no raids after this year but back then raids occurred frequently... If not for the raids from various vicinities, we would have never become village guards. Of course the village guard system is not a good thing at all. No one would want to do it. *Wife of a village guard 3, Lice*

Wife of another village guard expresses that they chose to become village guard not out of poverty but to defend themselves against PKK:

> The reason why my husband and the village became village guard is surely not because of financial issues or money. They are very wealthy; they have wide fields. They are landlords; they are a tribe. The main reason is the Apo supporters. Because the Apo supporters came to our village and killed my husband's brothers and nephew right in front of our eyes. The village was never the same again; the order in the village was lost and they became village guards. *Wife of a village guard 4, Kızıltepe*

Becoming a village guard as defense against the PKK attacks is in the spotlight especially in villages of Mardin.

> I became a village guard in 1986. I have been a village guard for 24 years. We started the village guard duty in the village. Terrorists would come to the village, pushing people to give food, guns and men and to build a shelter. That's why we became village guards and defended our village. We voluntarily became village guards; no one forced us to do so... I was financially well but we could not bear with the raids any longer and I became a village guard... To protect our village and dignity and to ensure our safety; that is why we became village guards, not for Money or to kill people. *Village guard 13, Midyat*

A village guard from a village guard where Arabs reside tells the story of arming as in the following:

> We came from Baghdad. We are from the ... tribe. We migrated in 1400's and settled in here, naming our village after our tribe. We started to serve as village guards in 1988. It went on like that and now there are 85 of us, including the retired ones. Voluntary guards (not getting paid) are around 35, and a total of 125 village guards... We began to work as village guards because of terror activities; terrorist would come to the village, asking for food, help, ammo and youngsters to join. Decided that we cannot continue like this, we sided with our state, grabbed our weapons and began to defend our village. This went on like that; from generation to generation. We were afraid our terrorists taking our youngsters, so we sided with the state. We are having troubles with outsiders of village because of our Arab ancestry. *Village guard 14, Lice*

There are lots of village guards stating the reason for being village guard as not to get stuck between state forces and PKK. However, taking a side does not help them from getting stuck in between. Taking a side creates a rift between the family members who joined the other side and leads to the destruction of the family.

> PKK terrorized us and demanded money and guns. When we refused to cooperate, they declared us as enemies. They were attacking the village. We got the guns inorder not to be caught in the middle, not for money, actually it would have been better if I stayed in the center and be a shoeshiner. We are not against Kurds; we too are Kurds at the first place.

> What we are against is PKK. We are pleased with the state; state is good. In truth we are stuck in a rock and a hard place; PKK and the state. 2 of our cousins are guerillas." *Village guard 15, Van, Squad Commander*

Family ties are also a determining factor in being a village guard.

> I was working at the Kralkızı Dam in 1993. I had social security and I was insured. It had bonuses as well; I was very happy with my life and job. My father was a village guard back then; I had to quit my job and return to village when he was killed. I had 11 siblings, 2 of them in the military back then. My family needed me, so I came back to the village. I came back so I could take care of them and protect them from harm. With nothing to do to make a living in the village, I had no choice but to be a village guard. *Village guard 16, Silvan, head village guard*

f. Quarrel and hostility between families

Because of hostilities, fights or blood feuds in the village that have been going on for a long time, sides would also take guns to defend themselves or to get the upper hand on the "enemy".

> Village guard duty here started because of land feud. For their own safety, everybody became voluntary village guards, so they could access guns. My husband did not have a job before the village guard duty. First his father became a village guard, and then my husband also became a village guard, as a tradition. *Wife of a village guard 5, Lice*

g. Pragmatism- seeing the village guard duty as a normal job, as a family profession

There are people who see the village guard almost as a civil service too. With a pragmatist point of view, they calculate the social security and financial benefit that being a village guard will bring them.

> I'm a high school graduate, 35 years old. I was born here but raised in Adana. My household population is 6. I am a village guard for 2 and a half years, and my story of being a village guard is like this: I was in Adana and they said it was like being a watchman. We thought it was the same as being a civil servant, but it wasn't so we resigned. Then they said that

> there will be some sort of regulations and asked us to withdraw our resignations. And so we did. Back in the day my cousin was the mayor; he was the one that called us and asked us to be village guards. I resigned as soon as I learned that there was no health coverage. This went on for a couple of times, tricking us every time with a promise that it will be resolved, it is still bugging me so I am considering resigning again. I used to live in Adana and repaired shoes there for a living. No one forced me to become a village guard, not the organization nor the state. It was my own will. *Village guard 17, Midyat*

Village guard duty is also seen like a kind of family profession. In fact having a single village guard in the family was enough for the whole family to be known as "village guard family" and this serves as a perception for people to distinguish friend from foe. This perception also affects the future of the family and especially the children, without leaving any chance for a choice.

> All my relatives, including my uncle and brothers are all village guards. Village guard duty is a tradition in our family now. Everyone here is a village guard since 1985. My father was martyred when he was a village guard, and I was touched by it. I am a village guard since 1995. I chose to be a village guard because it was a family tradition. I am a head village guard and my salary is 820 liras. Not for money, I volunteered for it. Because my father died as a village guard, because all my relatives are village guards. I am still a village guard. I don't need the money; I have a car worth 60,000 liras anyway. *Village guard 18 Van, Association president*

Those who started voluntarily become paid village guards as soon as they get the chance.

> I am 29 years old, dropped out of high school in the first year. Household population is 4. Place of birth: Eğil. I started to work as village guard in 2010. I chose to be a village guard because my cousins, my 2 older brothers and my father are also village guards. Not only that, but also due to my loyalty to the state and a need to protect myself. I am a voluntary village guard, but if they let me I want to be an official one. *Village guard 19, Eğil, voluntary village guard*

2. Village guards and their families talking about/questioning the village guard system

> *Whenever my son sees his grandfather, he says "Grandpa the soldier". I tell him that he's not a soldier but he says back, "No, he is". Military uniform and the gun; he sees his grandfather as a soldier.*
>
> Daughter of a village guard 6, Mardin

> *Village guard system means protecting your own village;it is not walking in the front lines with the military at the back in every operation. Military misused the village guards. They were not doing their job; they passed it to the village guards.*
>
> Village guard 20, Kulp

Not all the village guard duties are the same; there are different kinds of village guards. While some village guards actively participate in the clashes, those who live far from the battle zone carry the title of village guard without doing the things that village guards in the battle zone do.

> We never had any problems with either the state or the guerilla. We don't have problems like that around here. We do not have any friends who became village guards out of their own will. Our title is village guard but we are more democrat and conscious than anyone else. We are more conscious for Kurds and for our people. *Village guard 4, Van*

But not all village guards are like that. The article 8 of the "Village Law"[10], where the Village Guard System is based on states: "Within the boundaries of the village, Village Guards are deployed to protect the chastity, life and property of everyone." However, for the time the village guard system is in effect, village guards join the operations against PKK alongside gendarmerie when necessary - in the front lines, to be exact, to protect the gendarmeries.

> As village guards, we were on the front lines. We were sent in advance for scouting most of the time. There was this incident on one night of 1997. There was this location, they said 'terrorist spotted'. There were 7 of us. We were together with a military unit, I don't know what, division or

> something. We were not wearing kevlar or some sort of armor to protect us. He lined us in the front and the soldiers at the back. In our opinion, this is very wrong, very wrong indeed. I mean, it is night and the soldiers shoot at the direction of the sound of Kalashnikov and both terrorists and village guards use Kalashnikovs. As if the terrorist shooting you is not enough. Soldiers shoot in the direction of that sound and it is night. So we said that this was wrong. We were told, "Our soldiers won't hurt you". I mean it was the commanding officer's fault. We did not have armor on us, because we knew our lives were not worth anything in their eyes. *Village guard 3, Lice*

Regardless of how they became village guards, willingly or not, they all say the same thing; they are not pleased with it. This discontent is mostly because of the way they are treated by soldiers. As they express their discontent for how they are used for things that are not their duty and seen as "forces that can be sacrificed by soldiers", indicates the flaws and faults of the village guard system.

> We became village guards so we could protect ourselves with the guns of the state. Village guards are not meant to lead the soldiers in every operation. The village guards protect their region. The system was wrong, the practice was wrong and things just got more tangled. Village guard system is to protect your own village, your own region, not walking in front of the soldiers in every operation. The soldiers also misused the village guards. *Village guard 11, Kızıltepe*

It can be seen that village guards question the system and things they have done from time to time. However, this questioning does not help them at all. When thought about the initial reasons for becoming a village guard, quitting does not seem like an option. Also, because of the semi legal property of the system and gendarmerie using the village guards also as intelligence agents, mistrust among village guards is present. These insecurities prevent the village guards from acting as a whole.

> During the operations, when we were all alone with the friends (village guards) we would ask what we were doing here But then again a traitor would pop up and snitch on us to the commander. And just because of this, one of our friends was going to be dismissed, with a punishment. You just can't trust anyone; we requested from the commander not to dismiss, telling him that we were slandered. *Village guard 20, Kulp*

Some say that the village guard system is good for something; it prevents their children from being abducted by the PKK.

> The benefit of this system is, if not for the village guard system, the terrorists would enter the villages and take our children away. *Village guard 21, Midyat*

a. Military is taking advantage of us

> *Now that we realized that the state is using us, we do not go as willingly as before.*
> Village guard 10, Kızıltepe

Village guards frequently express how their duties are exploited and how they are made to do things that the soldiers are supposed to do. Perhaps the most prominent thought among the village guards is that they are being used by soldiers. They say they did not notice that at first, but realized as time went by.

> We were more excited, more active in work back then. Because of the things I've been through and the relatives I've lost, I participated in operations more enthusiastically. Now that we realized we are being used by the state and we are concerned about our families and children, we are not enthusiastic about going for operations as before. *Village guard 10, Kızıltepe*

> The state also plunders the village guard system, if it hadn't it would have abolished it. Bacause thevillage guard is a guide to the state. Culture, morals, geography, everthing is known by the village guards and this is how the state uses them. If the village guards become aware of this, they will also be dismayed by these things. *Village guard 4, Van*

Village guards say that they are being used by soldiers for even jobs unrelated to matters of state. These jobs are not defined as duty of a village guard.

> There are times when we are on 24-hour watches, every 3 days. We join the operations too. Anything gets done as the station pleases... For now, we are unnecessarily on watch all the time. Right now, for instance, we are on watch at Botaş oil pipelines. In fact, those places are privatized, not related to state. Bu they still ordered to watch there. Soldiers are using us too. *Village guard 22, Midyat*

b. Going on an operation

> *We are almost like robots. We don't have a social life; like a robot, all we can do is to follow all the orders given.*
>
> Village guard 23, Kızıltepe

Village guards say that they had to obey every order and they were frequently sent on operations.

> We join the operations, we stand on watch. Until 2000, we went for operations frequently. But now we do not go anymore. We wish for peace and for world to be at ease. Operations would take 3 to 4 days; we would be out of the village during that time. *Village guard 7, Van*

In fact, it is ironical that the clear statement on the temporary village guards joining the operations outside their villages only takes place in the Regulations of the Village Guard System which was announced in the Official Gazette on July 1, 2000. The Regulations of the Village Guard System aims to regulate the "procedures and principles regarding employment, area of duty, duties, responsibilities, training, dismissal and other personnel rights of the village guards."[11] We indicated that the village guard system was launched with an amendment made on March 26, 1985 to the Article 74 of the Village Law numbered 442 which was passed in 1924.

Two articles of this Law regarding joining the operations (going on an operation) contradict each other. Article 68, which reads as "Within the boundaries of the village, Village Guards are deployed to protect the chastity, life and property of everyone." defines the domain of duty of village guards as their own villages. However, the additional clause of the same Law clearly states that village guards join operations: (Additional clause: 27/5/2007-5673/1 article) "Living expenses and needs of the temporary village guards who join operations alongside security forces are provided by the related security forces and their budget". This contradiction is a sign as to how the village guard system, a paramilitary organization, is being conducted arbitrarily and reshaped and used according to the needs of the moment. Also, frequently seen in paramilitary organizations, associating the "state security" with confidentiality became evident in 2005 with the help of a news spread by the media. Regarding the

written parliamentary question of CHP Deputy Mesut Değer addressed to the Ministry of Justice "whether the government issued a secret regulation or not" on the village guard system was replied by Cemil Çiçek, the Minister of Justice, as: "certain inconveniences may appear in case the Official Gazette announces the Regulations on Temporary Village Guards which regulates the assignment of the personnel that will be employed for preventing terrorism, area of duty, duties, responsibilities, trainings and dismissal". Çiçek also mentioned the law that states "the regulations including classified information regarding the national safety and national security cannot be published".[12] In the same respect, the amendments done in this Regulation in January 2008 were kept secret on the grounds that they are "restricted".[13]

Operations would sometimes last for months, keeping the village guards away from their homes.

> Be it Muş or Bingöl or Şirvan, they would take us to operations anywhere they want. This is the problem. Day and night, sometimes for months, we were outside. *Village guard 20, Kulp*

A wife of a village guard on his husband's long lasting departures for operations:

> There are no specific work hours. My husband is the head of the village guards. He can't help me out with things because of indefinite working hours. When he'll be called is indefinite. He's summoned immediately when there is an operation. He's also summoned when a different specialist sergeant comes. I can't take care of the kids on my own; I wish my husband could help me out. *Wife of a village guard 6, Eğil, wife of head of village guards*

Another complaint is, up until recently, village guards had to take care of journey and food expenses during operations. After an addition to the Village Law in 2007, this changed: "Living expenses and needs of the temporary village guards who join operations alongside security forces are provided by the related security forces and their budget."[14]

> Up until 1999, we would go with our own cars. Then terrorists started to recognise our vehicles, so we started to walk for kilometers. We've been through very hard times that can't be put into words; you have to live it

> to understand. We would build a tent on trailer of our tractor and join operations every single day, despite the pouring rain. We had a life like this until the 2000's. *Wife of a village guard 3, Lice*

Village guards are included in operations not only inside the Turkish border, but operations that would extend to Iraq as well.

> They have even sent us to northern Iraq. We may join the missions of gendarmeries, infantry, or special operations department; simply with anyone who tells us to join them. And since we don't know our rights, we cannot oppose them. We are constantly being used by the state. *Village guard 10, Kızıltepe*

> Actually we want to be regarded as civil servants. Just like the rights a noncommissioned officer has, we want them for ourselves too. We are village guards, but we go to other regions and join operations in other districts as well. *Village guard 24, Silvan*

We have already presented in chapters *Village guard system in Press* and *Village guard system discussions in TBMM* that the activities of village guards are not limited to joining operations but also include murder, abduction, and raids with the disguise of a guerilla, smuggling, and involvement in unsolved murders through "gangs" and "task forces", and working for JITEM[15].

c. Village guard battalions

In village guard system, hierarchially there are heads of village guards, team leaders and village guards. Although heads of village guards are usually the the village headmen, number of head village guards can vary according to the number of village guards in a village. In addition to this, there are special battalions for certain places and tasks. In Şırnak, for instance, a village guard group called "timê xençerê" (Dagger Team) joins more serious operations. The "Lightning battalion" of Van consists of 5000 village guards. In this battalion, there are battalion commanders consist of village guards and village guards who introduce themselves as company commanders.

A village guard that is a battalion commander talks about the change of the village guard duty in recent years. The state, which once needed battalions of 800 people in the 1990's do not send village guards to operations anymore.

> ...Battalion was formed in 1996. We were about 800 people. Some retired, some killed in action. Now they don't even go on a mission anymore. Since this government came to power, village guards do not go to the mountains for operations and they only perform routine tasks. *Village guard 12, Battalion commander, Van*

This time, president of a village guard association talks about the members as if they are his troops, like in a military organization:

> We have 5580 village guards. There are 1500 village guards in Çatak, additional 350 in its villages. We have 180 martyrs, 35 veterans, 40 voluntary village guards and 10 female village guards. *Village guard 18, Van, president of an association*

This type of organization is an indication of the power of the village guard system as a paramilitary entity and reflects the difficulty of its elimination in the future.

d. Solidarity among village guards, associations

In the 2000's, associations were founded to defend the village guards' rights and to help the families of deceased village guards. There are village guards associations in provinces and counties where the village guard system is still active. In the Facebook page of General Village Guards' Rights Protection Assistance and Solidarity Association (founded in 2006), the following statement can be found: "Our institution aims to defend the rights of village guards, provide any help and support to the village guards and the fight against terrorism."[16] President of a village guard association we have interviewed explains their objectives as in the following:

> We found the instituiton in 2007. Our aim is to help the relatives of the deceased village guards. We give stipend for the children as much as we can. Village guards donate 5 liras. We also provide help and assistance to the village guards in case of an accident or any other occasion. We don't have a health insurance or compensation rights. I am retired now but I still have a Green Card. *Village guard 25, Association president, Midyat*

Being a political party member and a village guard at the same time is

prohibited by the law. Village guards can only be a member of a political party after they retire. One of the interviewees who is a retired village guard, a president of a village guard association and a current member of MHP (Nationalist Movement Party) was one of the few who were happy with the village guard system.

> Before I was a president of an association, I used to be a team commander. I became president by election. None of the village guards here chose this path willingly; either they were going to join PKK or become village guards. We have around 500 members. I also happen to be member of MHP organization since my retirement. Soldiers and village guards are like brothers in the operations; they get along really well. But people look at village guards in a very different way. We chose to be village guards for peace of mind, not for money. I am happy about the things we have done. Of course I am tired and have suffered but I have done all these things for my country and I am proud of it. I am retired now but I have applied for the voluntary village guard duty once again. I will do it with all my heart. This is not a Kurdish movement, this is the movement of people who have eyes on our lands. How could ever a Kurd kill a Kurd if it was a Kurdish movement? *Village guard 25, Association president, Midyat*

e. How village guards see the relation between military and village guards

> *[Military] Station does not trust us. They would never tell where we are going during operations. Neither they trust us, nor do we trust them.*
>
> Village guard 4, Van,

> *The path of the organization is clear, however, the path, the aim of the state and the nation is not.*
>
> Village guard 20, Kulp

> *Soldiers are good to us sometimes. But there are times they put pressure on and insult us too.*
>
> Village guard 26, Midyat,

Procedures and principles regarding employment, area of duty, duties, responsibilities, training, dismissal and other personnel rights of the village guards were defined by a regulation only in 2000.[17] According to this regulation, village guards are under the authority of the village headman in administrative issues and under the command of gendarmerie in professional issues.

> When we have a problem, we talk to the soldiers, not to the head of district. The head of district does not care about us anyway. We are under the command of gendarmerie in terms of mission. *Village guard 24, Silvan*

On the other hand, ambiguity in the ranks of the village guard system causes a confusion among village guards about to whom they are subject to.

> We don't actually know which establishment we are connected to. But here, we are under the command of the Gendarmerie Company Command and the head of district; they call us on a mission so we go. There are times when we don't know where we are headed for the mission. *Village guard 1, Kulp*

Not only ranking, but village guards are not informed about the location of mission and commander of the mission either. This is because of soldiers' lack of trust in the village guards, a fact expressed frequently during interviews.

> Location of mission, area of mission, what we are obligated to do and what we are not obligated to do; this is what we want to know. Then we will do our job. We won't run away from our duty anyway; we are voluntary village guards after all. We would stay in the regions where the security commanders of our counties sent us for a week, sometimes up to 10 days. They take us to operations in various places. There is this problem here; they can take us anywhere we want and we want to know exactly how far they are allowed to take us. We need to know who has the right to handle us like that so we can stand up for ourselves, defend our rights. We have that right. *Village guard 3, Lice*

Tension and mistrust between the state and village guards' shows that the government has failed in creating the "state-sided" population it wanted to create during the establishment of the village guard system.

> [Military] station does not trust us. They would never tell where we are going during operations. Neither they trust us nor do we trust them. We never look at each other during missions. They never call us unless they really have to; neither they come nor we go. Village guard system was started for the fight against PKK; because village guards know the politicans, people and the region very well. They wanted to make use of it. They have written a report about me, perhaps 50 pages long, all negative things. Luckily nothing ever happened; they could have wasted me easily.

> They have spied on me many times, to kill me. If not for the village guards, government could never have taken a step. It was the village guards who showed the way and reported the terrorists. Government used the village guards a lot. *Village guard 4, Van*

> Every time go out of town to Hakkâri, Mardin, Diyarbakır etc. my car is searched thoroughly, just because I'm a village guard. *Village guard 11, Kızıltepe, retired*

Employee's rights are not managed according to any written regulations. Work conditions are usually determined by the gendarmeries they are under the command of.

> Because we are oppressed, we regret going on missions. There is a problem in the system. There is no authority around to speak with. If there was, we could tell all our problems. We want to know who we can talk for our complaints and what we are responsible of as village guards. For instance, some ranked soldier came by one day and asked us if we were on watch. When I comfirmed, he replied, "Your rights to stand on watch here have been revoked, why aren't you informed?" I said that until now we were not told any such thing. He said, nothing will happen, you continue to do so. I don't mean to run away from guard duty, but it should not be this way. I said, "I mean, if something happens during guard duty we should not be held responsible". He told me I was right. So we stopped standing on watch there. What I am trying to say is, we should be doing things -whatever they are- we are responsible of. *Village guard 14, Lice*

The fact that there are no written rules, or written rules are not obeyed leads to the arbitrary actions of local administrators.

> Soldiers use village guards for their own chores. They say "What are village guards doing when there are no operations? They should help out with the chores, carry stuff around here in station". How do you expect loyalty to the state from the village guards after this? *Village guard 11, Kızıltepe, retired*

> We are being exploited by the people and the state. I have had two incidents recorded in my criminal record before. The reason is; after an operation, they would give us excess and the confiscated guns, saying that we could keep it. But when they see us with those guns, they would put in our criminal recored. They use the things they approved against us. *Village guard 10, Kızıltepe*

Arbitrary and illegal doings of soldiers towards village guards are one of the most expressed complaints. Instead of law and regulations, arbitrariness and personal benefit are prevalent in village guard-soldier relations. Not only soldiers don't treat village guards, who were allegedly employed to defend their villages as equals, but they also do not trust them. For this reason, comtempt is common and by the initiative of the station, village guards would find themselves fired immediately.

> We don't have the slightest clue on what the tomorrow may bring; we may be fired at a whim because we are considered as temporary. Two reports by the station is enough for it. If you are not on good terms with the district gendarmerie, you will be fired If you don't have a friend from inside, they kick you out in the slightest mistake. *Village guard 10, Kızıltepe*

> I have a brother who had been a village guard for 20 years. One day he got sick and went to a doctor. Doctors gave him a report saying that he had poor vision and could not use a gun, so the station took his gun. Without granting any other privileges, they just paid him 20000 liras they also said he could not retire either. Wrong doings such as this are numerous. *Village guard 27, Midyat*

On the other hand, those who were forced to be village guards and want to be freed from the duty are heavily oppressed.

> Let's not fool each other; I told the commander. Neither I would shoot my son if I were here nor he would shoot me if he was in the mountain. That's a lie. There is no place for an honest man in this merciless society. Village guard system is what destroyed this country. I refused to be a village guard at first. They kept putting an unbearable pressure on me for 5 to 6 years. He who went down to the station and refused the duty, honestly, his head would roll. I was so relieved when I quitted the village guard duty. *Village guard 20, Kulp*

The following quotation is an indication of the bad feelings of village guards towards the insulting and tormenting soldiers.

> I was very unhappy about the way they treated me. But I endured it in silence. Because I did not have a chance to stand up for myself. I was insulted very frequently; sometimes too much to bear. But nothing would have changed if replied; on the contrary, they would declare us as terro-

rists or beat us up. I have a family, I had to bear all that but I can never forget the things I have been through. *Village guard 20, Kulp*

I don't like being a village guard at all. We cannot bear to obey the specialist sergeant's orders. Because we are notable, what we do for this country is very important; we should not be treated like this. It would be much better if the system was abolished. Village guard system is damaging the country's reputation. Village guards fought so much yet the state did not see any of it. When it comes to defending the military, state does not fail but as village guards, we suffer a great deal of pain in the battle against PKK, yet the state does not see this struggle we are in, the pain we feel, this battle we fight. They don't care about us, they don't see that we are targeted, our own people consider us as traitors, yet the state does not see these. They should have appreciated our services; they should have cared about us. Even the rookie soldiers would look down on us. No matter who you are around here, if you are a village guard, then all your reputation, your dignity is lost. *Village guard 11, Kızıltepe, retired*

3. Transformation of villages and social relations

Our village used to be prettier, well kept, like a big city. But then people moved out of the village because they did not want to be village guards. Now the village is silent; it is nothing like it used to be.

Village guard 7, Van

No matter who you are around here, if you are a village guard, then all your reputation, your dignity are lost.

Village guard 11, Kızıltepe

We used to visit them (families) every now and then, but no one likes us anymore.

Village guard 28, Eğil

a. How village guards are perceived

The relationship between village guards and non-village guards in villages varies according to location. While in some villages, village guards are not treated badly, there are villages where village guards are cut all ties with,

even by their own families. These attitudes towards village guards are closely related with how they tell their story of becoming a village guard and how they express the village guard system. Relations with the ones who became village guard in order not to leave their villages and does not treat their own villagers badly are more normal. On the other hand, it is known in some villages that the village guards were involved in operations which resulted in death of PKK guerillas and various crimes. Even the families of these village guards cut their ties with them most of the time.

It is known that village guards have joined soldiers in village burnings, unsolved murders and attacks in the 1990's. This is why tension between the village guards and villagers has reached its peak during those years.

> Problems started to arise when I became a village guard. Especially in the 90's, people even stopped greeting us. Despite the fact that my uncle, my father and my brother were killed by PKK, people still did not understand us, because they consider someone who was killed by PKK as a traitor or a spy and that he deserved it. *Village guard 10, Kızıltepe*

> There were lots of clashes before 1997; we have lost a lot of our people. Almost every night there was harassing fire. There were mines in the gardens, at the entrances and at our sentry posts. We could not get out of the village; there were mines in the mountains, roads and vineyards too. Nobody could stay comfortably in their homes; everbody was outside. How our families were continuously living outside, what they were eating, we could not think about any of these. We have lost around 16 people from the village in operations that occured in the vicinity of the village between the years 1990 and 1997. *Village guard 14, Lice*

The shifting of operations from villages to the regions where PKK guerillas are found after 2000 resulted in a relief in relations between the villagers and village guards.

> Since the whole village is related, no one here treats the village guards badly but neighboring villages do. They would even say, "Those people are village guards; do not talk to them or trade with them". In other words, those people support terrorism. "Don't give them a ride", they would say. But after the 2000's we were relieved, things started to calm down around here. *Village guard 13, Midyat*

Wife of a village guard tells how they were tricked in becoming village guards, how the state sees them as less than human and how they were ostracized by other people:

> They offered my husband to be a watchman. We didn't know they meant village guards, they did not speak of it. They don't care about the village guards, they don't see them as human beings. State turned them into village guards and abandoned them. And people ostracized them. We are stuck in a rock and a hard place. We are devastated. *Wife of a village guard 7, Mardin*

Village guard system turns family members against each other. Especially, village guards who are known to be on the side of the state are ostracized even by their relatives.

> We have relatives who are not village guards but we are not talking with them because they are wrong. They defend PKK, saying that we are on the wrong path. "Leave your weapons and let's talk about it. If you don't, then you're not our relatives anymore", that's what they say. *Village guard 29, Lice*

> I am a high school graduate and have been a village guard since 1998. I also happen to be the head of the village guards. At our center, we have 8 voluntary village guards and 15 village guards employed by the government. In the year 1995, people became village guards at the center... There are a total of 184 employed village guards. This number increases with the voluntary village guards. My task is to stand on watch at night. We have been on bad terms with the Kurds for a very long time; we support the state and my father is a voluntary village guard. In fact we have relatives supporting the organization but we have different opinions. We used to visit them every now and then, but no one likes us anymore. *Village guard 28, Eğil, head of village guards*

Not only the village guards, but their families are also ostracized as well.

> My uncle's wife, who lives in Diyarbakır, says "You are the wife of a village guard. You are irreligious and unbeliever". Are we supposed to be treated like this, I mean they humiliate us like that. Of course it is hard to bear; we're going through a lot of difficulties. *Wife of a village guard 7, Mardin*

Although they know there is nothing to defend about being a village guard, village guards who are unhappy with this attitude enumerate their legitimate excuses for being a village guard and claim that they are treated unfairly by their community.

> We are unhappy about how the public thinks badly of us too. As if the Kurds had rights in the first place and we took those away and obstructed them. We became village guards because there wasn't any other job to work in and the organization was harming us. We became village guards for money and to protect our chastity. We are living a depressed life. *Village guard 16, Siluan*

> We have non-village guard relatives too and we don't have any problems with them. We are not like any other village guards anyway. I am happy with being a village guard because our villages are not destroyed thanks to that. If we hadn't become village guards, it would be destroyed. Apart from the village guard duty, I am also a gardener and I am in a poplar growing business. I don't have any problems neither as a civilian nor as a village guard. Our village is very nice and modern. *Village guard 30, Mardin*

Having a father who is a village guard results in the exclusion of the whole family, especially the children. This exclusion is not limited to the village and its surroundings. Especially, wherever they may go, it is almost impossible for the children to get rid of the stigma of being the child of a village guard. That is why most of the children avoid telling that they are a child of a village guard in schools and workplaces. The greatest reaction is actually seen in towns and places where the village guard system is not practiced. The political environment of the big cities is cruel to the ones who sided with the state.

> We have problems in the metropoles as well. They verbally insult us sometimes. We cannot reply them most of the time. Kids were scared because we were village guards; they would cry whenever there is a clash. No one was killed in this village. Believe it or not, no one visits us or stays for the night anymore since we became village guards. One time, when my child went to Istanbul, he faced problems there too, because of the village guard duty, so he came back... We don't have problems with anyone, people have problems with us. We have a field that we can't visit, much less cultivate it. Village guard system does no good to us; just provides protection for ourselves. Population of the village is 400,

> 80 of them being students. In another village, there was also problems between the children and we had a firefight with the villagers. Then the soldiers broke up the fight before something serious happened. Girls of our village attend schools too, including high school. They go to Lice and Bingöl but those who attend there keep the village guard duty as a secret. *Village guard 8, Lice*

This time we hear a village guard child on his relations with relatives and friends:

> I am 17 and middle school graduate. I had to leave the school due to financial problems. My father is a village guard; we are in a bad financial state, we cannot move to a better location. I have 4 siblings, all middle school graduates, and a household population of 6. My father is a village guard since 1987 and my uncle was killed in action. When my father was in an operation in Bingöl, we heard the news that a mine exploded. We were told it was my father; we were devastated but luckily it wasn't my father... I have relatives who are not village guards too, living in other villages. But we are not keeping in touch with them anymore. My uncle (mother's brother) and his family hates us ever since we became village guards. We only see each other sometimes in weddings and funerals but some of them won't even show up. We sometimes have quarrels with friends whose fathers are not village guards. They tell us to vote for BDP (Peace and Democracy Party) but we say that we vote for AKP (Justice and Development Party); that's why we fight sometimes. *Village guard child 8, Silvan*

Village guards are worried about the difficulties their children face in school or workplaces.

> I sent one of my brothers to a brick factory in Diyarbakır to work. But when his coworkers found out that his brother and his father are village guards, their attitudes changed, they started to react negatively. Eventually, he had to return to the village one week later. I am worried about my children's future as well. *Village guard 3, Lice*

There are youngsters who take a stand against the treatment they are subjected to for being a village guard child and try to convince the people around them:

> I spent my high school life in Mardin. I really learned about life there. My friends, the atmosphere are very different. My friends love me. I first

> kept being a village guard child a secret. When they learned, they made fun of me for having a village guard father. Then I said thanks to that we are safe in our village and never hungry. After I explained the situation, they were nice to me again. *Daughter of a village guard 1, Mardin*

Daughter of a village guard expresses her frustration towards the oppression from other people through a Kurdish point of view.

> It doesn't matter if father is a village guard or not. I'm Kurdish, and so is my father. He doesn't claim to be Turkish. Let this be known. We are all Kurds here. Just because we are village guards does not mean we are Turkish. People should stop saying "you are the daughter of this or that" when we go to rallies at the [city] center. *Daughter of a village guard 9, Mardin*

b. Fears

We are all awake; we cannot sleep.
Village guard child 7, Silvan

My husband is already dead but we are still scared, because we are labeled as traitors.
Wife of a village guard 6, Silvan, husband killed in action 15 years ago

Village guards pay the price of pulling gun to their own poeple by living in fear inside their homes and villages. Wife of a village guard talks about the fear experienced by the whole family and how this fear locks them inside their home and village:

> We cannot send the children to the mountain. We cannot go to vineyards alone. I would never go there, it's far too scary. We are scared of almost anything for being village guards. We only go if someone accompanies. Men just never go, women go there more compared to men. *Wife of a village guard 5, Lice*

A village guard tells how the fear affects their families and the whole village:

> We used to be more comfortable. When the village guard system was first introduced, people got depressed; everybody in the village is depressed. It was not apparent at first but in time, people who have witnessed the tough times –especially women and children- became psychologically ill

> and their states of mind worsened. This is because of the fear, provocation and troubles. Our children and wives cannot go very far from the village; they don't know the backside of the mountain behind the village and they can't go there anyway, because they're scared. They can only go at most to the village; and that's because there are village guards. *Village guards 3, Lice*

Lives of village guards and their families are shaped by "fear":

> There are two village guards in our family; me and my brother. We cannot take our families for a picnic or a trip. We are even scared to get 2 kilometers far from the village. *Village guard 16, Silvan*

Wife of a village guard tells about the fear in her children as in the following:

> They attacked the village once. I was so terrified that I was speechless for a week. I could not even drink. I was looking out there, saw my husband and father-in-law (both village guards) fighting, my whole body turned blue out of fear. I could not answer anyone who was talking to me. Every time when my husband left out of the door, the kids would tell him 'baba neçe tu ji be kuştin' (Don't go out daddy, you will die too).They knew he was going to an operation. How could they make our children go through all of this? *Wife of a village guard 7, Mardin*

The complaints of village guards, their relatives and neighbors on ruining of relations shows how the village guard system splits villages and perhaps irreparably, damage social relations.

c. Thoughts, feelings and longings of the wives of village guards

> *Worst of all are the operations and raids. Sound of gunfires scare us all to death. As if we were hit by the bullet.*
>
> Wife of a village guard 5, Lice

Wife of a village guard tells about their ruined lives and how they long for a normal life as in the following:

> We are very scared when our husbands go for an operation. We are sick

and tired of waiting every time to learn if they are alive or dead. We want to live a normal life like everyone else; we don't want to live in fear like this. We can't go for a picnic or to gardens because both we and our husbands are afraid to go. Both we and our children are victims. We want a peaceful life. They [husbands] do not sleep at night and only sleep during the day; their nights are day and days are night. Because they are on guard duty all the time. *Village guard 8, Silvan*

Women openly express the suffering the fear brought by the village guard system caused and how they are unhappy about it:

We wait in fear every time my husband goes for an operation. This pain of waiting is what was killing us. Even it was the only job to do, I wish my husband had never chosen to be a village guard. *Wife of a village guard 9, Silvan*

They may be the one's fighting but we suffer much more when our husbands go for an operation; we don't know if they died or are alive (in a low voice with teary eyes). This system is bad. Who would ever want her husband to be a village guard? Even our husbands don't want to. But there are no other jobs, what else can they do? *Village guard 10, Silvan*

Once there was an operation in the village. My husband joined that operation. I was nursing my child at the time. That night, I was so afraid, so worried when my husband was in an operation that my breastmilk dried up. *Wife of a village guard 11, Mardin*

d. Being the child of a village guard

Because my father is a village guard we'll be stuck in here. And perhaps I will have more serious problems in the future. If I can't go to university, I may end up unemployed and return to the village. When I return to the village if I fail to find another job and get married too, I might have to become a village guard as well. This won't be a choice but a necessity.

Son of a village guard 2, Mardin

They did not have any problems in the school, because they introduced themselves as the children of the village headmen, not as the children of a village guard.

Village guard 30, Mardin

> *We keep it a secret. For example I am currently working with an engineer, in a project. They don't know about my father being a village guard..*
>
> Village guard 4, Mardin

Children pay the price of the decision that was not theirs by waiting in fear the news of their father's death any moment, and being shunned in social relations in the schools they attend. In order to avoid discrimination and exclusion, they keep their father's being a village guard a secret and prefer not to leave the village as much as possible.

> My father went to an operation once. I was a kid back then. I grabbed him by his legs, telling him not to go. Who are they to make us go through all this? Bullets were buzzing over my head. They were coming to the village to oppress us. Not only our villages, but other villages as well. I can remember clearly even after all this time. *Daughter of a village guard 8, Mardin*

> I work at carpet business. We work with one of my siblings, we have to work because of financial problems. My dad was martyred when I was little, 14 years ago. He was killed when he was on watch. I do not face with any problems for being a child of a village guard. I don't leave the village anyway, so I have no problems there. I wish my father was alive, that's what I want the most. If he had never been a village guard, he could have been alive today. Perhaps if he were alive, he would have sent me to school. I wish I could go to school; things would be very different. *Daughter of a village guard 9, Mardin*

Wife of a village guard expresses her worries about future of her son, who is against his father being a village guard as follows:

> My son goes to school. He is also unhappy about his father being a village guard. I explained it to him many times but he says he would rather be starving than to see his father as a village guard. I don't want him to be ignorant, I want him to be well educated. But I have worries that he might be shunned in high school and in college. Sadly, people do not want to understand us. *Wife of a village guard 8, Mardin*

Daughter of a village guard summarizes her brother's and her attitude on this:

> We cannot say we are children of a village guard in places we go; it may cause problems. My brother is a university student and he keeps it a secret there too. *Daughter of a village guard 10, Lice*

The biggest obstacle for children to work in a legitimate job other than being village guard, especially finding a job with a payroll in Kurdistan, is their parents being village guards. Village guard children think that the village guard system jeopardizes all their future. The youth have to bear the psychological burden of this feeling of being cornered.

> We have financial problems, psychological problems no social insurance. It bothers me to be obliged to live in the village; we lack lots of things in life. And because my father is a village guard, we'll be stuck in this village forever. Perhaps I will face greater problems in the future. And maybe if I can't go to a university, I may fail in finding a job and return to village. When I return to the village if I fail to find another job and get married too, I might have to become a village guard as well. This won't be a choice but a necessity. *Son of a village guard 2, Mardin*

> We keep it a secret. For example I am currently working with an engineer, in a project. They don't know about my father being a village guard. Similarly, we keep this secret when we work in private sector as well... In our relations with kids whose fathers are not village guards, we experience jealousy and lack of love. When I face this kind of difficulties, I never get mad at my father or have any negative reaction. Because I know he became a village guard out of poverty... I am not thinking of becoming a village guard at all because we know the things we have been through. Those who were behind us are now ahead of us. I think of village guard duty as a source of living anyway; it does not give you power and reputation, you cannot brag about it. All I want is the raise of village guards' wage. *Son of a village guard 4, Mardin*

Children who suffered from this type of treatment state that they won't be village guards in the future.

> I went to high school in Mardin and I had problems there during that time. And I realized there how troublesome the village guard duty is. I did not want to tell about my father being a village guards because when I did, it could start a fight. I was being constantly insulted. They would call us traitors. After a while I tried to keep it a secret. Village guard duty is meaningless. I don't ever want to be a village guard. I remember my father going for operations. I was affected very badly. *Son of a village guard 2, Mardin*

The wife of a village guard explains the polarization in Turkey based on being a Turk/Kurd and simultaneously being/not being a village guard through the future of her son:

> I am afraid that my son might change when he goes away for university. Because either they turn into Kurdish nationalists and get beaten up by Turkish nationalists or are constantly harassed by the Kurds for being a son of a village guard. Son of one of our relatives went to university and turned into a Kurdish nationalist. He does not understand his parents anymore; he's very reactive towards them. I am scared that my son too will turn out like that. I don't want my son to have wrong ideas; I just want him to study, be conscious of everything and then defend Kurdism like that. There has been so much cruelty already; we want this to end and live a peaceful life. *Wife of a village guard 12, Mardin, formerly a member of PKK*

4. Economic aspects of the village guard system

We had only our guns left, and a few cows.
Village guard 24, Silvan

The state has obstructed our lives.
Village guard 4, Van

Sometimes the village receives coal and food aid. They say "You are village guards, no aid for you". They don't provide us with aid; village guards don't have the right to receive aid. The aid is provided by the state, yet village guards are not allowed to have it.
Daughter of a village guard 9, Mardin

We have presented previously on section, *How did the village guard system commence?* of the field research the quotations on how they became village guards due to poverty. In this section, we will investigate the economic aspect of the village guard system, how the village guard system affect families' economic activities and financial situations and convey the village guards and their families' demands regarding their personnel rights.

a. Village guards' income, financial compensation, retirement, health insurance

The salary of the village guards, the payment they will receive as financial compensation in the time of leaving the job and clothing allowances are determined by the ministry of internal affairs and the ministry of finance and customs.

> One of my sons is a village guard and as a family of 17 members, we all live by with his income only. *Village guard mother 1, Lice*

> He has been a village guard for 11 years. He could not find any other job; that's why he became a village guard. We live in the village and people in the village are in general relatives. His income is low but still, it is better than nothing... We don't have any other income. We can't send our children to school, we can't eat or wear the things we want. My husband rarely takes us to markets because he cannot afford to buy the things we want from there. *Wife of a village guard 9, Silvan*

b. Disengagement from production: Village guard duty as a full-time occupation

> *Before we were employed as village guards, we were working in our fields and vineyards, stockfarming. Youngsters were working outside; they were molding workers. But now we have become village guards, we can't go out of the village anymore. Things got worse after the village guard duty; we became poorer. We did not gain anything out of it. Not only it's useless but it's harmful.*
>
> Village guard 29, Lice
>
> *After becoming village guards, we were neither allowed, nor had the time to take care of our fields. On the top of that, we were scared to go near the fields. We could not do anything for 6 years..*
>
> *Village guard 7, Van*

Most of the ones who started to work as village guards to earn money and escape the poverty think that village guard duty did not help them very much

economically.[18] Those who used to earn money by farming are now drifting away from production. Not only this negatively affects the region's economy, but it also renders the abolition of the village guard system and chanelling villagers back to agriculture almost impossible.

> We had various ways of making a living before the village guard duty. We were more productive back then, cultivating crops and raising livestock. We quitted all of it when we became village guards, because we were on duty all the time. *Village guard 20, Kulp*

Village guard duty is a 24-hour job in most of the regions. We hear an example of it from a son of a village guard whose father can't even take a day off to visit his son in the hospital:

> Nothing much in our lives changed after my father became a village guard but my father's life changed drastically. I have a heart disease, and my father could not come to the hospital to visit me. *Son of a village guard 1, Mardin*

According to the Village Law which regulates the village guard system, "in addition to being a village guard, like starting and running a shop, coffee house or an inn, having a share in such businesses, leaving the duty to serve a villager or himself without permission, to pasture one's own animals and sheperding" are in the list of prohibited occupations.[19] Although there is such an article in the law, village guards who are not taken to operations and those who live in regions where there are no clashes, can carry on with their agricultural activities. Those who continue with their agricultural activities are relatively in a better state.

> We were raising livestocks, cultivating tobacco and taking care of our vineyards before the village guard duty. We are still taking care of the vineyards. Nothing much changed after the village guard duty in here; we did not lose our fields, we stayed in the village. We have seen some of them; they were devastated. *Village guard 31, Kulp*

In most of the villages of Kurdistan, it is a common practice for families who cannot make a living solely with their activities in the village to go for seasonal work since the 90's. Young men of the families would find jobs in big

cities, usually as construction workers, to help the family economy. Just like in the agricultural activities, chances of going out of village are also taken away with start of the village guard system. This is how village guard system acts as an impoverishing factor.

> I was working as a contractor before the village guard duty, we have even built a park in Istanbul once. We used to go to meadows, feeding our sheeps. We have sold it now, we don't go there anymore. We've bought a few cows and we are raising peppers in the gardens now. *Village guard 8, Lice*

> We used to work away from home before the village guard duty. Now we can't do that anymore. *Village guard 14, Lice*

> For example I had a truck. I sold it when I became a village guard because nobody wanted to be a truck driver; everyone was afraid of getting killed for being a village guard driver. *Village guard 13, Midyat*

Since the men of the families are village guards, the division of labour in the households is affected by it; work load on women and children increase. Wife of a village guard tells about how her husband's change of job forced her and their children to work in someone else's fields:

> My husband has been village guard for 18 years. He used to go to work in constructions before the village guard duty. We were much better off back then. But when he quitted that job and became a village guard, we started to have financial problems. Because of this, kids and I go to work in the fields. *Wife of a village guard 13, Kulp*

> Life of the whole family is shaped by the village guard duty.

> Sometimes in the first days of the month, we get into a quarrel with our father. Ever since he became a village guard, he's been nervous too. When my older brother asks for money in the beginning of the month they fight, saying that he doesn't have any money. We can't work in any other jobs already; we can only work when a relative calls us. *Village guard child 8, Silvan*

> People quit agriculture out of fear of PKK's retaliations too.

Vineyards, beehives, things to make a living; we had it all. We didn't have any financial problems. We couldn't take care of our vineyard and animals after the village guard duty. We did not have the time; also they would lay mines on our fields and kill our animals. They would lay mines on our roads too; that's how you became dependant on the income of the village guard duty. *Village guard 13, Midyat*

They also think that the state discriminates against them.

They are talking about mercenaries, they will have an income of 2000-2500 liras. After serving for 7-8 years, they will receive a bonus of 70000 liras. But in fact, they are no different than us. Why are we treated differently? *Village guard 22, Midyat*

c. Personnel rights

Now that we are in this, state should be taking care of us.

Village guard 19, Eğil

We are people who supported the state all this time; they should have lent a hand. But instead, they just pushed us away with its hand.

Village guard 14, Lice

Those who were classified as temporary village guards were only given a salary when the system commenced in 1985. In the 2000's the village guards were given some additional rights. Although it is difficult to determine the factors for providing these rights, some of them can be discussed. MP's who are also a member of tribe help this topic to be discussed in the National Assembly. In addition, they establish village guards solidarity associations. In an organized manner through these associations they visit the National Assembly and General Staff to convey their demands to the authorities. Especially in the beginning of 2000's, the existence of village guards who have been serving for 15 years requires a review of compensation, retirement and health problems and the regulation of their retirement age and rights. While the village guards could not receive any health service, after the year 2005 village guards are allowed to have a green card and for themselves and people whom they are obligated to

take care of. [20] There is a relative increase in the income and compensation with the amendments made to the Village Law in 2004. And with a recent change in 2012, the general health insurance became vaild for the village guards.[21] Also, as of July 2013, pensions of village guards who are 55 or above are raised. The lowest pension is raised from 383,96 to 652,72 liras and the highest pension is raised from 614,33 to 883,10 liras.[22] Although it is difficult to say if the changes made in the personnel rights in 2000's is out of gratitude and sympathy or to keep a paramilitary force who is getting stronger and stating their demands on their side.

However, village guards are not pleased with these personnel rights:

> We do not have a health insurance. Instead, we benefit from Green Card23. In fact, they have been tricking us for years; saying that our health insurances will be given that year. But still, no health insurance. We have devoted our lives to this for years, but they still haven't given us our health insurances. They are actually committing a crime; they are employing us illegally. We have stated a couple of times but station told us that they have informed the higher authorities and they could not do anything else about it. In the western countries, even in the simplest job, people are provided with insurance. Yet, here the state employs us without insurance; even in such a dangerous job. I'd be lying if I told that the village guard duty had its benefits; on the contrary, it took a lot from us. Things got worse and worse after becoming a village guard. No security of life, no peace; it took away everything. *Village guard 1, Kulp*

After being employed for years, they are still deprived of personnel rights that are granted to government employees.

> I can say openly that we have been tricked. I don't know if it was the state or the authorities here, but they took our rights and still not giving them. At least we used to be peaceful before this whole village guard thing. Back in the day, even though I did not have any money, I was working in someone else's fields peacefully. We are not at peace anymore... Why did the state do all this? They've tricked us, took advantage of our ignorance. We did not have time to think of our future when we became village guards, we just accepted the duty. *Village guard 1, Kulp*

Commander of a village guard battalion which is known from the news

in the press for tormenting villagers and guerillas expresses these demands as follows:

> Our demands are; personnel rights of village guards, depositing of social security benefits and insurances, and severance package. We also want registered firearms, to protect ourselves. We have a battalion; it is known by the name ...Battalion. Village guard 18, Van, association president

While a lot of families who are below the poverty threshold are provided with food, coal and educational aid, village guards cannot benefit from this aid provided by General Directorates of Social Assistance and Solidarity for receiving a regular payment. This is one the of village guards' complaints as well.

> We don't have a health insurance, we benefit from Green Card. The state is not helping us at all, no child aid or anything like that. They said they cut them all; even the coal aid, because they say we receive a regular salary. We cultivated crops and raised livestocks before becoming village guards. Our income was better, we did not have any troubles with making our living. We used to have lots of visitors without any problems but today we can't even entartain a single guest. They don't let village guards to have another job at the same time too. *Village guard 15, Van, company commander*

The educational aid provided to the region's families with low income is not provided to village guard families.

> We cannot send our children to school because our expenses are large. They bring aid to the school as well but they don't give us any of it, saying that your father's a village guard. We don't have any lands, gardens or livestocks. Even if we had, who was going to take care of them? We are too scared to go to meadows to pasture them. *Wife of a village guard 10, Silvan*
> I faced difficulties for being a child of a village guard. For example, we were never given the children monetary aid, because my father is a village guard. They say that your father receives a village guard salary. We want to go to school but due to financial problems, we can't. Sometimes we wish our father hadn't been a village guard. Maybe we could have gone to school that way. *Village guard child 8, Silvan*

5. Illegal activities that village guards were involved in

> *I cannot get myself a registered firearm, because I have a criminal record. But I could get one when I was a village guard; my criminal record was not taken into consideration back then.*
>
> Village guard 11, Kızıltepe

> *I don't think of my children's future; I think of myself. Because I am scared; scared that they might come after me and kill me. As for the organization I think of them as an enemy, if we run into each other, we would kill each other.*
>
> Village guard 29, Lice

> *Let's say I harmed someone, did him wrong, counting on my gun. But once they take it away from me, I have no chance of getting away with my wrongdoings. Thank God I did not harm anyone.*
>
> Village guard 29, Lice

In time, village guard system transformed into crime mechanism created by the hands of the state. We have already mentioned before that most of the one's who accepted the village guard duty by their own will became village guards to avoid punishment for their crimes. It is also known that people get firearms to dominate other families in family feuds. In addition, in 1996, when the rules and regulations regarding the employment of temporary and voluntary village guards were remade, those who took advantage of the repentance law were also given the chance to serve as village guards. State does not see anything wrong with employing villagers who have commited crimes to provide "security".

We see the state resorting to illegal means in the process of employment and arming of village guards in a statement of a village guard:

> I'm 57 years old. I cannot get myself a registered firearm because of my criminal record. But I could get one when I was a village guard; my criminal record was not taken into consiredation back then. But even for village guards, one should not have a first degree relative who has a criminal record because of political crimes. Despite being caught 7 times, nothing like that ever happened to me. Not only I became a village guard, but they gave me the gun as well. *Village guard 11, Kızıltepe*

If we take look at the data on the crimes commited by village guards, according to Turkish Parliament Research Commision Report of Unsolved Political Murders[24], village guards got involved in crimes like arms and drug dealing and smuggling; despite receiving their payments regularly, these village guards wanted by courts were never caught. Especially village guards who are members of a "Village guard tribe" act on the orders of tribe leaders, declaring people who are not on their side as PKK supporters, and oppressing them. According to the aforementioned report, 23,817 temporary village guards were suspended between the years 1985 and 1997. 20,319 of these village guards were reported committing the crime of neglect of duty. According to the data announced by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, from the year the village guard system was commenced until the year 2006, 2,402 village guards were involved in crimes of terrorism and legal action was taken against 936 village guards for crimes against property, 1,234 village guards for crimes against individuals and 428 village guards for smuggling.[25]

Village guards we interviewed prefer to explain crimes commited using other village guards:

> Some get financial gain out of this job. This financial gain is everywhere, on both sides. *Village guard 25, Midyat, Association president*

> One day, for example, we went to an operation. Some of the village guards were pillaging and maltreating; they were shooting civilians. We would quarrel with them for acting like that sometimes. You have heard about the village guards of Bilge village; that's how they were. PKK would then oppress those maltreating village guards and raid their villages anyway. *Village guard 30, Mardin*

When asked about the village guards – crime relationship, village guards state that soldiers too were involved in the crimes.

> N.Z is in charge of regional public order. He also did narcotics, killed people, then went to jail for narcotics. He was both the public order commander of Hakkâri and all regions. *Village guard 4, Van*

As we know from the press ….Battalion had been involved in numerous illegal activities; a group of village guards known in the region for their ruthlessness. Commander of this battalion tells about their activites as follows:

> ... Battalion did not have a specific location; it had a name. We would meet in my house. I was in charge. Even my house was raided once. So I realized I grew tired of this, fed up with system and came into conclusion that this was not the way of an honest man. Because I picked up this gun to fight against terrorism. But things have changed now, so I distanced myself. Now I am just taking care of my own business. *Village guard 12, Van, Battalion commander*

Village guards are involved in unsolved murders alongside JITEM and the informants. In the interviews, village guards explain these events as not what they have done but as those other village guards have committed.

> We were forced by the military to abandon our village 20 years ago. They told us to leave the village, otherwise they would burn it down, claiming that we were helping PKK. My question as citizen is: how am I supposed to take care of my family of 15 members? I am poor; I only have 3 cows... We were better off before becoming village guards, kids were working. If the village guard system is to be abolished, I might as well leave this place. Let's say I harmed someone, did him wrong, relying on my gun. But once they take it away from me, I have no chance of getting away with my wrongdoings. Thank God I did not harm anyone. I don't think of my children's future; I only think of myself. Because I am scared; scared that they might come after me and kill me. As for the organization I think of them as an enemy, if we run into each other, we would kill each other. In my opinion, both the military and the organization are on the wrong track; they are both traitors. The incident in Silvan recently, it was definitely the military's doing, not PKK's. And the soldiers claimed it to be an accident. *Village guard 29, Lice*

Those who are aware of the extent of the village guard–crime relationship that is too blatant to cover up and claim to have never been involved in any crime react to the generalized idea, "All village guards have been involved in a crime".

> We are uncomfortable about the generalizations about the village guards. There are bad ones indeed, like the one's abducting girls, etc. but we are not like them. *Village guard 10, Kızıltepe*

6. Opinions on the abolition of the system

> *We think of death during clashes; not only our deaths, but the people we are about to kill as well. Because this war is in vain. Why are we killing? Why are we dying? We don't get it. I will quit being a village guard as soon as this whole thing is over.*
>
> Village guard 32, Mardin

> *If it is going to be abolished, then so be it. But if they just leave us as we are, there might be turmoil.*
>
> Village guard 12, Van, Battalion commander

> *I think this can be solved but they just won't let it. Neither the state nor the organization wants it to be solved because everyone has benefits in this whole thing.*
>
> Village guard 31, Kulp

There are different opinions among village guards regarding the abolition of the system. Village guards who were forced to take this job, those who have never been in a clash and those who did not torment people around their villagers want the system to be abolished. Another group demands for protectioni job and personnel rights if the system is to be abolished. This group does not want to give up the power being a village guard and the weapon.

Village guards who want the system to be abolished as soon as possible points out their wish for a peaceful life without any threats the most. They express their regrets for being a village guard and their wish for getting rid of the gun and the village guard stigma as quickly as possible.

> We never had any incidents around here. We did not let that. We never had any problems with the soldiers or the guerilla too; they were okay, we were okay... We have never had dispute with Kurds, soldier, guerillas or the public; we did not want to fight anyone, we are not on the side of the system, we were obliged to. *Village guard 4, Van*

If the village guard system were abolished, I would return to Adana. I

am a shoemaker. I wish it was abolished so we could go back. Finally I want to say that I wish for peace and I hope everyone can live the life as they please. *Village guard 17, Midyat*

It would be better for us if the village guard system were abolished, because it is not an honest way of life. We cannot tell people that we are village guards; we regret being one. We discuss it all the time among ourselves; why did we ever become village guards? There is even an association in Mardin, but we never visit there, although they take 5 liras from us every month. We want this problem to be solved immediately, so we can put down our arms and walk around free from fears and live all together without any clashes or problems. *Village guard 33, Mardin*

I hope one day they will come up with a solution for this problem. We would be the first to put down arms if a solution were found. We ever accepted the village guard system. Our village and the neighboring villages were all forced to become village guards. *Village guard 4, Van*

Those who became village guards out of poverty are thinking about leaving the country to make a living.

Abolition of the village guard system would make things tough for us. If the village guard system was abolished, we would leave the country. We used to go to Istanbul to work. But now life is hard and expensive in Turkey, so I would consider leaving the country. I lived in Lebanon before. Then I returned to the village and since I could not find another job, I became a village guard. My wife did not want me to become a village guard, but we had no choice but to accept it, despite its low salary. *Village guard 22, Midyat*

a. They demand their rights

The frequently expressed feeling of being tricked by the state is mentioned once again when the topic is putting down the arms. During the stage of elimination of village guard system, they don't want to give up their personnel rights granted after years of service for the state.

They are using us, taking advantage of our good will. We want our rights to be given, we want peace. Everyone's rights should be given... Also I want to say these; doesn't matter who they are, I wish people stop killing

> each other. Let's say no to guns altogether and no matter who they are, I wish for everyone's right to live not be taken away from them. *Village guard 1, Kulp,*

> I have good hopes. God willing everything will turn out fine, so we can live like brothers and put down the guns. I would quit in 24 hours, if only this whole thing is solved and they reach an agreement. A lot of cruelty happened because of these guns. Some village guards abused and tormented people relying on their guns. *Korucu 30, Mardin*

> If the village guard system is to be abolished, then just let it be. I want it to be abolished; As long as things are calm, I would put down my gun instantly. I have high hopes for my children, they are currently in high school. In fact, one of my daughters passed the university exam to become a teacher. *Village guard 30, Mardin*

b. Financial situation – they want jobs

People who live by the village guard salary demands from the state to provide them with jobs. They state that if the state finds a job for them, they will quit the village guard duty immediately.

> If the village guard system is to be abolished, the state has to find a solution for us. I mean, what can I do at this age? How can I think of my children's future? We have financial problems, we're poor. *Village guard 8, Lice*

> In any new reorganization, we want this; actually I will go anywhere the state assigns me to and do any job. I want to work. Anywhere is fine; it can be a job in a school or in the municipality. *Village guard 21, Midyat*

Wives and children of the village guards agree with their fathers. They want to get rid of the village guard duty as soon as they are given another job.

> Village guard system is not a good thing. Because neither we are financially in a good situation nor we are at peace. We want the state to abolish the village guard system and give us a different job. *Wife of a village guard 11, Mardin*

> While daughter of a village guard wants his father to quit his job, she is

also aware of the fact that he has to do it to take care of the family and it gets harder to find another job after a certain age:

> No job around to work in. If there was a job, if I knew that everything will change, I would face my father myself, without getting my mother or anyone else involved but myself, and convince him to quit the village guard duty. But what can he do when he quits? At this age, he cannot work as a construction worker, as a janitor or a porter. What can a 50 year old man do? Not just my father, but he has lots of friends who don't want to do this, but there is not any other job to work at. *Daughter of a village guard 9, Mardin*

Some demand employment as a prerequisite for quitting village guard duty, and openly thraten that otherwise village guards would create problems.

> I wish for all these affairs to stop and peace; then we will put down our guns, let everyone live in comfort. If this system is to be abolished, then so be it. However, if the state abandons us, then there might be problems, and incidents may occur. The state should better find jobs for the village guards, or else. *Village guard 32, Mardin*

c. Fear of the PKK

There are people who think that they will lose their security of life if the village guard system is abolished before the PKK is eliminated. They believe that they are needed to end "terror", the system should not be abolished before the "terror" ends.

> If you take back his gun before eliminating PKK, how can he protect himself? You have already the wasted the village guard. When a village guard goes to a public office, people react negatively. I cannot tell them that I am a village guard; they cannot say even in government public offices, because they are afraid to. *Village guard 12, Van, Battalion commander*

> They cannot dismiss us until the terror is over. It's not like we want the terror to continue so we can keep being village guards anyway. No village guard would think like that. *Village guard 13, Midyat*

While they mention that they are needed as long as the struggle with PKK continues and it is impossible to eliminate the system, we observe that the relations with the state is not very well. The anger towards the verbal abuse and

disregard of soldiers and government officials is expressed frequently.

> We are running out of patience; we want to shout out. If we snap, it will be worse than PKK. The things is, there are times BDP stand up for us in National Assembly, yet AKP has never defended us. MP from Mardin, Muammer Güler was forcing and threatening the village guards to vote for him, anyway. *Village guard 23, Kızıltepe*

Especially the village guards who hire bodyguards –usually a member of a village guard tribe or a battalion commander- demand a guarantee for protection from the state if the village guard system is to be abolished. In fact, preparations have already been started by meeting with state authorities:

> I went to the Internal Affairs, asked how they were going to protect me. I am not telling this to be a hero. You can find it in the documents; my house was raided, I became a target and I still am. We still walk around with bodyguards. I asked how they were going to protect me; it is state's duty to protect me. Yet we still walk around with bodyguards. *Village guard 12, Van, Battalion commander*

> We as civilians are scared because we are not on good terms with people in the mountain who have lost their children. They already think badly of us; they will kill us as soon as they get the chance. If the village guard system is to be abolished, we will be killed, because we are in jeopardy. *Village guard 30, Mardin*

There are people who are worried about their security if they give in their guns. Therefore, those who will abandon their villages if the village guard system is abolished want the state to provide them with jobs.

> If they abolish the village guard system, they should give us a job somewhere else. We are not comfortable in our own homes, villages anyway. I don't think our future is bright. *Village guard 24, Silvan*

Village guards who were cruel to people and therefore detested both by villagers and PKK has no intentions of putting down their arms. These people openly announce that they will rebel if the elimination of the village guards is completed before their demands are met.

> If the state abolishes the village guard system, we will be killed and it will

> be responsible of that. People are angry with us, and sometimes they are right about it because some of us were very cruel to them, and oppressed them... State cannot just say "This duty is over now, hand back your arms and go". If they ever did that, things would get worse; we would rebel. *Village guard 28, Eğil, Head of the Village guards*

> We made lots of enemies for voluntarily serving as village guards. The attitude of "How can a Kurd serve as a village guard" is always present. But we love our state and we love our Turkey. We would happily sacrifice our lives. We won't stop until the terrorism stops. Even if the state stops, we won't. *Village guard 18, Van, President of an association*

The transformation of the village guard system into some kind of mechanism in the years to come is hinted in the quotation below. It is not clear whether this insistence on not putting down the arms is caused by the hostility towards PKK or the fear of trouble they'll be in after putting down their arms. But this quotation gives us the clues that some of the village guards turned into a group who won't even listen to the state forces they are under the command of.

> Even if the village guard system is abolished today, and even if the state takes back our arms, there is no way we can make peace with the organization. We cannot be on the side of the organization, we are not on the same page. Even if the military reconciles with the organization, we cannot. We did not become village guards to betray our people or the people's struggle. We defend the Kurdish struggle, we are their friends. We support the Kurdism also. In other words, just because we took the weapons of the state doesn't mean that we are enemies of our own people. We are enemies with PKK; we are simply protecting ourselves from their doings. *Village guard 11, Kızıltepe*

Although the discussion of the abolishing of the village system continues, the new employments of village guards by the state gives contradicting messages.

> Recently 400 new openings became available at Midyat, 64 openings were allocated to specific locations, wherever there is need. They allocated them in the last year. *Village guard 25, Midyat, Association president*

> As far as I know, Diyarbakır had 200 openings before the elections. Village guards won't give up on their weapons easily, because they were martyred. *Village guard 8, Lice*

Notes

[1]See. Berivan Tapan (2007), *Terörün Bekçileri, Hamidiye Alaylarından Günümüze Koruculuk*. Istanbul: Güncel Publications; p. 20.

[2]There are still 700 village guards on duty from the Jirki tribe, who became the first tribe to accept the village guard duty in 1985.http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/Jirki_asireti_pkk_ile_kucaklasiriz-1131323 Entry: August 13, 2013

[3]According to the region's traditions, a person swearing an oath upon üçtaş and failing to keep his words is considered as if he denies his religion and divorces his wife. He is deemed dishonorable.

[4]See. Berivan Tapan (2007) *Terörün Bekçileri, Hamidiye Alaylarından Günümüze Koruculuk*. Istanbul: Güncel Publications, p. 106-107.

[5]See ibid. p. 107.

[6]See. Kalkınma Merkezi, *Zorunlu göç ve Diyarbakır*, Diyarbakır, 2010. http://www.kalkinmamerkezi.org/upload/kitaplar/zg_vd/zgVD_kalk%C4%B1nma_trk.pdf

[7]BOTAŞ is the state-owned petroleum and natural gas trading company. TN

[8]See. Kalkınma Merkezi, *Zorunlu göç ve Diyarbakır*, Diyarbakır, 2010. http://www.kalkinmamerkezi.org/upload/kitaplar/zg_vd/zgVD_kalk%C4%B1nma_trk.pdf

[9]Apoist is the name given to the followers of Abdullah Öcalan. TN

[10]http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/Metin.Aspx?MevzuatKod=1.3.442&sourceXmlSearch=&MevzuatIliski=0

[11]See. Regulations on Village Guard System Article 9, dated 01.07.2000 and numbered 24096 on the Official Gazette: http://www.seo.mavi1.org/mevzuat/20524.html

[12]GÖÇ-DER (2013), *Türkiye'de Koruculuk Sistemi: Zorunlu Göç ve Geri Dönüşler*, İstanbul, p. 2. http://panel.stgm.org.tr/vera/app/var/files/t/u/turkiye%E2%80%99de-koruculuk-sistemi-zorunlu-goc-ve-geri-donusler.pdf

[13]Adnan Keskin, *Yönetmeliği Bile Gizli*, Taraf, May 8, 2009. http://www.taraf.com.tr/haber/yonetmeligi-bile-gizli.htm

[14]Additional clause: 02/06/2007 - 5673 S.K/1.article. http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/Metin.Aspx?MevzuatKod=1.3.442&sourceXmlSearch=&MevzuatIliski=0

[15]Bedran Akdağ (2012), *Dağın Ardındaki Gerçekler. PKK, Korucular, JİTEM, İtirafçılar ve "Diğerleri"*, Istanbul: Ozan Publishing.

[16]See. https://www.facebook.com/pages/DO%C4%9EU-VE-G%C3%9CNEYDO%C4%9EU-G%C3%96N%C3%9CLL%C3%9C-VE-GE%C3%87%C4%B0C%C4%B0-K%C3%96Y-KORUCULARI/262112873842918?id=262112873842918&sk=info

[17]Based on the Village Law numbered.442, the regulation on Village Guard System is prepared by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and declared in the Official Gazette issued 24096 on July 1, 2000.

[18]As of May 2012, Temporary village guards have a salary of 761 liras. Also as an operation compensation they receive 24 liras and 76 liras as extra. "Türkiye'de Korucu Sayısı ve Aldıkları Maaş" TRT Haber, September 6, 2012 http://www.trthaber.com/haber/turkiye/turkiyedeki-korucu-sayisi-ve-aldiklari-maas-54735.html On September 4,2013, the Minister of Internal Affairs Muhammer Güler replied to the written parliamentary question entitled "Personnel Rights of the Temporary Village Guards" submitted by the CHP Malatya Deputy Veli Ağbaba. Güler informed that there are 46 thousand 195 Temporary

Village Guards in Turkey. As of January 2013, the monthly salary of a village guard is 849 Turkish liras. This amount is exempt from taxes, cuts and are paid in cash. The Minister also emphasized that the salaries of the village guards were increased in comparison with the salaries of civil servants. Güler reminded that since January 1,2012, all the temporary village guards are included in the general health insurance.

[19]http://www.egitimmevzuat.com/index.php/20091118251/Kanun/koey-kanunu-442.html

[20]See. Article 74 of Village Act (Additional clause: 28/12/2005 - 5443/1 article.) Village guards, who are not covered by any social security institution, as well as their dependents, will be issued a Green Card while, at the same time, exempting them from the requirements set forth by the 'Law Concerning the State Coverage of Treatment Expenses of Citizens who lack the Ability to Pay by Issuing a Green Card' No. 3816. In the determination of the dependents, the rules of the Civil Servant Law No, 657 will apply. These rules will equally apply to those village guards who left the job after minimum of 10 years and were paid reparations, as well as the healthcare expenses of their spouses and dependents including parents and children. (Additional sentence: 27/5/2007-5673/1 article.) In case of the monthly income of the spouse upon the death of the temporary village guards, the aforementioned beneficiaries shall receive the same examination and treatment allowances. http://www.kastamonu.gov.tr/ContentDownload/442%20Say%C4%B1l%C4%B1%20K%C3%B6y%20Kanunu.pdf

[21]See the guide of the Social Security Institution on General Health Insurance: "The persons who are village guards and who receive salary are deemed to be holders of general health insurance. They will continue to be the holders of the insurance without an income test or an entrance notification as long as their employment continues, or as long as they receive pension if retired." http://www.sgkbagkur.net/sgk-gss-icin-rehber-hazirladi/

[22]"Muhtar ve Korucuların Maaşına Zam" (Raise to the Salaries of the Head of the Villages and the Village Guards) Aktif Haber, July 12, 2013. http://www.aktifhaber.com/muhtar-ve-korucularinin-maasina-zam-820663h.htm

[23]Because the Green card was still in practice at the time of this field research, statements of the village guards include this practice accordingly.

[24]See Fedai Erdoğ (2005), *TBMM Faili Meçhul Siyasi Cinayetler Araştırma Komisyonu Raporu (The Report of Grand National Assembly of Turkey Commission for the Investigation of Unsolved Political Murders)*. Ankara: Gizlisaklı Kitap.

[25]See "21 Yılda 5 Bin Köy Korucusu Suça Karışmış" ("In 21 year 5 thousand Village guards got involved in a crime") Radikal newspaper. July 27, 2006.

V. COUNTRY CASE STUDIES ON PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATIONS / Osman AYTAR

1. Introduction

The system named village guard system is not only used in Turkey. Under different names and in different forms, other examples where a state provides salary and privileges to a group and arm them against state-opposing groups are present. Although the state does not officially or openly support certain organizations, groups and other entities, it nevertheless overlooks their wrongdoings and operates in collaboration with them. As a result of this, the scope of the issue gets bigger.

The purpose of this article is to examine the paramilitary organizations that are armed by their countries' states[1] and to form the basis of an international perpective of the past, current state and the future of the village guard system that was commenced by Turkey in the Kurdistan region in 1985. Philippines, Guatemala, South Africa and Iraq are the chosen countries. An example from each of these countries is thoroughly analyzed.

During the analysis of the aforementioned countries, it is aimed to answer these three questions: How was the establishment and expanding periods of the paramilitary organizations? What are the prominent practices and the social impact of the paramilitary organizations? What happened to the paramilitary organizations in the end?

What is meant by paramilitarism in this article is the act of using civilians against oppositions in order to maintain hegemonic order (Kowalewski, 1992). While analyzing the state-sponsored paramilitary organizations, it should be noted that although these organizations are primarily observed in countries going through a struggle of national and social liberation, they are not solely the problem of these countries. As is known, the countries that have fulfilled their revolution of national and social liberations and continue their transformation in this direction also face the problem of "civil militia" as a force to secure the gains of the revolution. Since the topic of this analysis is state-sponsored forces against the growing struggle of national and social liberation, "civil militia" and alikes will not be analyzed here.

Considering the paramilitary organizations, in addition to the purpose of

this research which this article is a part of, and the request and suggestions of the *Diyarbakir Institute for Political and Social Research* (DISA) members who also conducted the research, there were other criteria for choosing the countries, Philippines, Guatemala, South Africa and Iraq. First of these was to achieve a continental distribution. Secondly, these country cases have a process of historical development. Thirdly, they were chosen among currently practiced cases as well as abolished ones through an agreement or social and political changes.

The criteria for choosing a paramilitary organization from their respective countries was for these organizations to be the most widespread and longest lasting. As a result, these paramilitary organizations were chosen: Citizens' Armed Forces Geographical Units (CAFGUs) from Philippines, Voluntary Civilian Defence Commitees (CVDCs) from Guatemala, Vigilantes from South Africa and Saladin Knights (Fursan Salah al-Din) from Iraq.

In addition to the references I have used in my previous research, the data acquisition method used for the chosen paramilitary organizations and countries can be defined as systematic review (Polit & Beck, 2010) and the analysis that follows. During the literature survey step of the research, international data banks located in Stockholm University and Malardalen University in Sweden were primarily explored both before and after choosing the countries and the organizations between October 2011 and April 2012. In addition to this, Non-Governmental Organizations conducting activities related to Africa, South Kurdistan, Philippines and Latin America were contacted. Google was also used for searching references. Apart from the aforementioned criteria for research questions, the criteria for the country selection also provided a basis for including and excluding the sources.

2. Theoretical perspectives

Different scientific perspectives can be used for understanding the paramilitary organizations and groups. A number of theoretical perspectives and approaches regarding issues such as human rights, social control, collective violence, social justice, democracy, non-civilian organizations, class and group benefits can play an important role in a better understanding of paramilitary organizations and groups (For some perspectives see: Senechal de la Roche, 1996; Payne, 2000; Mazzei, 2009). In this article, based on certain scientific

research on paramilitary organizations, two perspectives used by David Kowalewski (1992), *the benevolent perspective* and *the critical perspective*, are used for analysis and discussion. These perspectives can be considered to be competing with each other. Kowalweski (1992) evaluates the differences between perspectives in the light of four aspects of the paramilitary process which are analyzed more thoroughly below: These aspects are; *mobilization, constitutionalism, order-maintenance* and *reactive public behavior*.

The benevolent perspective states that the mobilization of paramilitary organizations is an act of democratic volunteerism (Kowalewski, 1992). According to this perspective, paramilitarism is a democratic mechanism that is used to protect the institutions and processes when seen necessary. The paramilitary organizations are also not counted as the usual practices of the democracies in normal times among other practices like arming the citizens, use of guns for defense and resorting to arrests. However, they are considered to have a benevolent function according to this perspective. According to this perspective, constitutionalism is never absolute and people tend to grow affectionate of paramilitarism in times when the traditional legal processes do not function. That the conditions of personal rights lose their importance when the individuals and groups step out of the constitiutional boundaries, and the fact that the paramilitary organizations can be used against them in such a case is an important component of this perpective that has a positive attitude toward paramilitarism. Even though freedom has great importance, according to this perspective claiming that this could only be practiced within the frame of securing the public's will, citizens prefer order-maintenance over collective rights and will support the paramilitary forces when the regime needs them for maintaining order. This perspective, which claims that paramilitary forces are the sovereignity tools of the people and therefore the reactive public behavior will be positive, also states that, considering their contributions to public order, people will cheer for the paramilitary forces and the oppression of certain individuals for general public order will be supported.

According to the *critical perspective* (Kowalewski, 1992), which is the totally opposite of the *benevolent perspective*, the paramilitary units are forces that are distant from the wishes of the society. They cannot be held "responsible" for their actions and they can be manipulated and mobilized by an elite minority. Ruling classes, whose interests are threatened by the opposition, use the paramilitary

organization to protect these interests and try to cover their non-democratic intentions via paramilitarism. Even though paramilitary organizations claim to be acting according to the will of the majority, they in fact serve the minority. As they serve the ruling minority, paramilitary legions usually target the poor as well as organized opposing forces. According to this critical view, the social composition of the paramilitary organizations is based on doubt; they harm the constitutional order. They get involved in secret acts while defying the principles of transparency and responsibility. Arbitrariness, considering themselves as the law and in a way creating their own "constitution" are some of the characteristics of these forces. According to this perspective, use of these paramilitary and similar forces damage the order and maintenance; instead of respecting the law, these forces strengthen the opposition to the law and end up being in dispute among themselves and the security forces. Another thesis of the critical perspective is that the paramilitary violence gives birth to counter-violence. Contrary to benevolent perspective, for critical perspective, the reaction of the public to paramilitary organizations is negative and although the regime might benefit from them in the short term, paramilitary organizations damage the regime in the long term.

3. Different countries' experiences

Paramilitary organizations selected regarding different country experiences are introduced based on finding answers to the questions stated in the introduction considering their countries of origin. Within this frame, in each part regarding the countries, the establishment and the expansion of the paramilitary organizations, their practice and social effects and their current state and process of elimination are investigated.

a. Philippines: Citizens' Armed Forces Geographical Units

The paramilitary organization selected from Philippines as a different country experience are the *Citizens' Armed Forces Geographical Units* (CAFGU). Although the discussion of the elimination of these units in parallel to "reorganizing" and democratization has been on the agenda since this article was written, CAFGU are still active today. CAFGU were established in July 1987

in place of *Civilian Home Defense Force* (CHDF), which was formed in 1972 by the president of the time, Ferdinand Marcos, who was known for his cruelty. Although CHDF were officially abolished in 1987, they carried on their activities until 1989, calling those two years a "transition phase".

CHDF were established by Marcos in 1972 as a force against *New People's Army* (NPA), the "military branch" of *Communist Party of the Philippines* (CPP) based on a law enacted in 1935. They were organized by the state and institutionalized mostly in the rural areas. These forces were disorganized and were short on equipment and supplies. As a result of the protests which started with Marcos declaring himself the "winner" by cheating in the elections of February 7, 1986, Marcos fled the country and Corazon Aquino came to office on February 25, 1986. This incident and the peace negotiations following the truce in December 1986 and an amnesty program raised hopes for a peaceful solution. However, meetings ended up as a failure in less than a month and clashes started more intense than before. This is when the so called "neighborhood defense groups" were established under the name of *Civilian Self Defense Organizations* (CVO) and these groups, together with other paramilitary groups like *Alsa Masa*, which is known for their anticommunist stand and act mostly in cities, were actively used by the state against the guerilla movement (Amnesty Internatıonal, 1992; Kowalewski, 1992).

Some reports Amnesty International prepared in the 1980's and the 1990's (Amnesty International, 1981, 1988, 1991a, 1991b) comprise detailed information on paramilitary organizations *Rock Christ* and *Lost Command*, which were active during the Marcos period and *Alsa Masa, Tadtad, Nakasaka* and *Walang Patawad*, which were active during Aquino period. Relations of these paramilitary organizations with the state and military, murders and massacres they got involved are a significant part of these reports. Until their reorganization in November 1988, paramilitary organizations like Alsa Masa, Nakasaka and Tadtad kept pursuing a systematical annihilation policy towards the NPA supporters and people who were active in churches and unions. In 1987, Aquino supported the paramilitary groups, justifying her stance saying it is "the reaction of the people against communism" and "self-defence". These organizations were trained and armed by military and cooperating with local authorities.

As a reply to both nationwide and international criticism on the crimes paramilitary forces got involved, it was reported that CAFGU, which were es-

tablished by Corazon Aquino, would be under the control of the military and trained by them with human rights being one of the key topics of the training. The purpose was to give the paramilitary forces a new "look". But shortly after, these forces showed their true colors and behaved similarly to their precessors. People who had gained notoerity for their actions in CHDF period were recruited into CAFGU. During the recruitment into CAFGU, opportunities and privileges like money "control" and "dominance" in their own region, were offered along with threats, blackmail, and force. Those who refused were accused of involvement in the guerilla movement and were targeted. Number of CAFGU members who joined the operations with police and soldiers against the guerilla movement was between 70,000 and 80,000 in December 1990. This is not a number to be underestimated considering the population of Philippines, which was approximately 60 million at the time. Not long after their establishment, CAFGU violated human rights on a large scale with their unruly behaviors. Paramilitary organizations also were used against the ethnic movements that arose in Luzon and Mindanao (Palme, 1989; Amnesty International, 1991a, 1991b, 1992; Kowalewski, 1992).

Todat the CAFGU demonstrates a fragmented structure. According to the data of *Commission on Human Rights in Philippines*, CAFGU, just like their precessors, CHDF, were involved in numerous incidents like arbitrary detainment, torture, murder, etc. (Amnesty International, 2011). Although there are some certain known parameters, it is difficult to predict the course of the progress. However, some developments summarized below shows that it is not easy at all to reform the forces in the boundaries of solution or solutions that exclude violence.

Benigno Aquino III, who came to office as the president of Philippines on June 30, 2010 and son of Corazon Aquino who has served as the president of Philippines right after the Marcos period, approved a proposal of the military on October 12, 2011, based on the excuse that three security guards were killed by New People's Army in mines managed by private companies in the Surigao del Norte region of North Mindanao. According to this decision, a portion of CAFGU were going to be employed in these mines managed by private companies under the name of *Special CAFGU Active Auxiliary Units* (SCAA). According to military's information, there are currently 41 SCAA units, each consisting of 100 people, trained by military. Military will be resposible from the inspection and

arming of SCAA, however, salaries of SCAA will be paid by the private companies. According to initial findings, it is already decided that 200 SCAA members will start working for two companies very soon and others will be assigned to their working sites determined by the companies. In the press release issued on October 14, 2011, *Amnesty International,* summarizing the recent developmens above, criticised this decision taken by Aquino III and warned that the military will fail to maintain the discipline and order of the paramilitary organizations and therefore create an environment where violence and human rights abuse are prevalent. According to the data of Amnesty International, apart from SCAA, a portion of CAFGU will be employed by the police and the military (Amnesty International, 2011).

Even though Corazon Aquino came to office and acquired the power with democratization promises succeeding over Marcos, who was forced to give up the power and flee the country, it is evident that Aquino and the following governments adopted a policy of interiorizing the conflicts and the civil war. Despite some changes in employment and administration methods, keeping these forces who got involved in various crimes in the system is a sign that the problem will persist.

b. Guatemala: Voluntary Civilian Defense Committees

The paramilitary group of Guatemala that is the topic of this section, was initially established during the General Efrain Riot Monnt period (1982-1983) under the name of *Civilian Self-Defense Patrols*. The name was changed to *Voluntary Civilian Defense Committees* by the military in 1986 during the transition to a civilian government. As a part of the deal between the Guatemalan government and the guerilla movement that was reached after the negotiations restarted in 1994, CVDC's were abolished (Ball, Kobrak & Spirer, 1999).

The establishment process of CVDC, as in many other countries, is closely related to the armed opposition struggle in Guatemala. Communist and guerilla movements had intensified their activities since 1962 in Guatemala and the 1979 revolution in Nicaragua raised the hopes of a revolution in Guatemala, just like in many other Latin American countries. *Guerilla Army of the Poor* (EGP- Ejercito Guerrillero de los Pobres), which was established in 1972, was the strongest movement and most feared by the state during late 1970s and early 1980s. In

addition to EGP, *Rebel Armed Forces* (FAR- Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes) which were established in 1962 and *Organization of the People in Arms* (ORPA- Organizacion del Pueblo en Armas), established in 1979, were also struggling against the regime. When EGP, FAR, ORPA and the communist party of the country, *Guatemalan Labor Party* (PGT- Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo) declared their union under the name of *Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union* (URNG- Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca) in 1982, the oppressive regime's fear increased even more. Support for the guerilla movement among the people and their activities gradually and significantly increased (Figueroa Ibarra & Marti i Puig, 2007).

Establishment of the *Local Irregular Forces* (FIL- Fuerzas Irregulares Locales) by the Guatemalan state in 1981 is a part of such process. This entity was established during the presidency of General Romeo Lucas García with the initiation of his brother, Benedicto Lucas García. During the presidency (1982-1983) of General Efrain Riot Montt, who seized the power with a coup in March 1982, a new organization that goes under the name *Civilian Self-Defense Patrols* (PAC- Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil), which would later on reach a member number of 800,000 with its great majority being villagers and natives, was established. Considering the population of Guatemala in 1983, which was approximately 7,100,000, this number was an indication of how the war against the guerilla movement, which was rapidly gaining the support of the people, was being spreaded. During Riot Monnt period, during which extreme-right wing and anti-communist groups were also used against the guerilla movement, some kind of war was declared on civilian natives, without differentiating between children, women or elderly who did not support the government against guerilla movement and the main strategy was, the exact frame that Riot Montt used himself, was "draining the sea that the fish swim in" (Ball, Kobrak & Spirer, 1999). According to a news on New York Times on July 18, 1982, Riot Montt went too far that he said in his speech he gave to the natives: "If you are with us, we'll feed you; if not, we'll kill you".

Without giving a specific salary, contrary to "volunteering" propaganda in the official discourse, these people -except for the extreme right-wing and anti-communist groups- were armed by use of excessive force and fear. Most of them were between the ages 10 and 20 and they would stand on watch for time periods ranging from 12 to 24 hours once a week or every two weeks. The purpose

was to maintain the governmental control of remote villages, of which 400 of them have been destroyed since 1980. These paramilitary forces, were involved in all kinds of tasks; including monitoring the entrance and exits of villages and fields, gathering up wood for the army and even killing people who were labeled as "destructive" by the state (Human Rights Watch/Americas, 1994).

During the transition into a civilian government in 1986, military established the *Voluntary Civilian Defense Committees* (CVDC) by changing the name of PAC. *Commanders*, who were in command of these units were renamed as *committee leaders*. Although it was intended to display an image of "volunteerism" instead of a military chain of command relation, most members of these units kept calling themselves "civil patrols" and "commanders" (commandantes). In 1988 a civilian movement that was supporting the villagers who did not want to join the paramilitary groups, became targets of paramilitary groups and those who wanted to quit faced coercion and assasination (Ball, Kobrak & Spirer, 1999). As can be seen, despite the differences particular to countries, similar to Aquino who succeeded Marcos in Philippines, the new "civilian" government in Guatemala mainly used the paramilitary forces.

The Guatemalan state attempted to split the people in the rural area as "state-sided" and "enemy" using CVDC. Those who took the arms of the state were considered as allies and those who did not as "enemies". Those who did not support the state were forced to migrate or were relocated to certain regions by the state's oppression (Ball, Kobrak & Spirer, 1999). One of the main purposes of these oppression and migration policies, which means turning the society into a warzone, was to diminish the increasing support to the guerilla movement and eventually eradicate it. Number of people who were subject to a forced migration between the years 1980 and 1983 alone is reported to be approximately 1,000,000, which is the half of the rural area population. During this period, approximately 50,000 villagers were massacred and 150,000 to 250,000 Guatemalans were forced to flee or leave the country (Smith, 1990). Considering that this process continued one way or another until peace accord was signed in the mid 1990s, it can be said that there was an increase in the scope of the damage given to the public.

Paramilitary forces, has helped out the state's military forces in suppressing, abducting even killing those who were forced to migrate both during the military and "civil" government periods. For example, when people of Cantel,

a place known for its textile industry and its long lasting traditionalized syndicalism, openly expressed their opposition to paramilitary actions they faced oppressions that also cost them the lives of many local leaders. The state also used the ethnicity differences to reach its goals in the rural areas. Contrary to official discourses, paramilitary groups of rural areas even actively joined the operations with the military. In order to gain their loyalty, the Guatemalan army would sometimes give the possessions of the slaughtered villagers to paramilitary group leaders and even overlook the "abduction" of the widowed villager women by them. During the mid 1980's, when the clash between the state and the guerilla was at its peak, women, children and elderly became targets of the paramilitary groups as well. In fact, before being killed, women in many regions were raped by soldiers and paramilitary forces. In areas where the guerilla activities are intense, people who did not cooperate with the state could be attacked by the paramilitary groups at any given minute. Paramilitary group leaders would extort money from villagers who wanted to return to their lands in certain locations (Ball, Kobrak & Spirer, 1999).

These alone do not complete the list of CVDC's actions. They had such an authority that they would come down on not only the government opposers, but also the people who opposed their regional authority as well. Personal rivals of group leaders, people whom they were in conflict with due to an old land or political matters could be targeted easily (Krueger & Enge, 1985). Especially the first half of 1980's became the "peak" for the actions of the paramilitary groups who by themselves or together with the army involved in murders, abduction and losing tracks of the individuals. (Ball, Kobrak & Spirer, 1999).

Due to international criticism and the negotiations with the guerilla movement, CVDC in some regions were renamed and transformed into *Peace and Development Committees* at the beginning of 1994. These committes were allegedly not going to be affiliated with the military. The importance of this step was emphasized in a letter written in January 1994 by León Carpio, who was to president of Guatemala at the time, to U.S president Bill Clinton. However a commission of *Human Rights Watch/Americas* confirmed during a visit to Nebaj in March 1994 that there was no change in these committees other than the name and these committees were working in complete collaboration with the military (Human Rights Watch/Americas, 1994).

The civil war that had been going on for 36 years eventually came to an end after 9 years of negotiation; the guerilla movement URNG and Guatemalan state, with the *United Nations* (UN) as the negotiator, signed the *Accord for a Firm and Lasting Peace*. Although the negotiations were interrupted during certain periods, they gained their momentum after January 1994 and other agreements regarding various areas were also signed until the Agreement of 1996 (Figueroa Ibarra & Marti i Puig, 2007).

CVDC were officially abolished as a part of the process, however there had not been a radical change or a confrontation, hence they kept their position in various places. On the other hand, Guatemalan army have supported new establishments like *Defense Committees* and *Pro-Improvement* Committees, alongside *Peace and Development Committees,* which were established before the agreement was in practice. An interesting fact is that, some of the CVDC leaders were members or assigned as leaders of these committees. This resulted in these seemingly new entities gradually turning into local security authorities. Some CVDC members started new crime organizations. According to the responses of the state on the criticisms regarding this matter, ex-CVDC members are not in contact to harm civilians, but to get a compensation for their "services" during the civil war. Stating that the government has failed in fulfilling the requirements of the agreement signed in 1996, *Inter-American Commission on Human Rights* suggested that measures should be taken against reorganization of ex-CVDC and ex-PAC members and leaders and cooperation of government officials with these groups should be prevented by 2003 (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 2003).

These kind of discussions continued in the following years, however, no radical changes occurred. For this reason it can be said that the democratization process entered in Guatemala with the agreement between the government and guerilla movement in 1996 paved the way of new strategies and tactics for both the government and the guerilla movement; this process alone is full of lessons to be learned. New groups of some of the members of ex-paramilitary organizations against "petty crimes" for instance, are growing the tension and insecurity. For these reasons mentioned briefly above it can be said that the elimination and "reform" of the old paramilitary forces contradicts with the spirit of 1996 agreement.

c. South Africa: Citizen Units

Despite being composed of various organizations and groups, the paramilitary group in South Africa, which is generally named as *Citizen Units,* are the *Vigilantes. Vigilantes* worked in cooperation with state during the racist regime of the white minority Apartheid (until 1994). The term "Vigilante" was used for violent, organized and conservative groups operating within black community. Although they receive no official recognition, Vigilantes attacked people or groups opposing the regime and they worked in close cooperation with different institutions of the state, particularly the police (Haysom, 1989). In this article, instead of focusing on a particular group forces which are generally known as Vigilantes, who served openly or secretly to the racist regime of the time, are taken into consideration.

The tradition of using the civilians for the state's benefits in South Africa dates back to 1910s and power holders, in return for certain privileges, constantly used some parties for their own benefits. However the state-backed organizations named Vigilantes became prevalent after the autumn of 1985. They were established especially in the regions where the police and the military failed against the public opposition developed under the leadership of the *African National Congress* (ANC). Not only the police would be a mere spectator to acts of these forces, whose main purpose is to neutralize the anti-Aparteheid people and organizations, but sometimes they would even side with these forces and join the attacks. The role played by these units, often likened to the fascist Blackshirts, against the ANC and other opposing groups, were conducted by "small states" (like a federal system) and other security organizations. As a part of the "divide and rule" policies of the racist South African government, the "small states" were established under the name of *Homeland* and *Local Black Authorities* in areas with a population of approximately 10 million. These administrations were under the control of the South African regime. They had little arable fields and high unemployment rates, own presidents, parliaments, armies and police forces and those who reside in these small states could only be the citizens of their "Homelands". The existence of these governments that directly served the state was in a way the confirmation of a second class citizenship and deprivation of the privileges that people may have by being a citizen of South Africa despite its racist policies (Haysom, 1986; Afrikagrupperna i Sverige & ISAK, 1986; Sekhonyane & Louw, 2002).

The militia forces that were established after 1983 in the regions where the ANC and the *United Democratic Front* (UDF) were active could also be considered as a form of Vigilantes. These militia could be armed quickly in case of a guerrilla attack and political unrest. White workers who worked in factories in South Africa also aided police in maintaining "order" in the regions where black people lived. Temporary workers were also armed and used against the ANC and other opposing forces through intimidation, blackmailing and providing financial gains. Additionally, schools in South Africa educated students for militarist purposes (Afrikagrupperna i Sverige & ISAK, 1986).

In the small State of KwaZulu, the police was the armed hand of the Inkatha, an active party that is known for its attacks against the ANC and other opposing fractions, and its claim in pursuing alternative policies. Inkatha membership was a requirement in order to get a job anywhere in KwaZulu, and particularly in the police department. Backed by the state, Inkatha not only killed the ANC and the UDF members and supporters and burned down their houses, they also attacked anyone who did not support them. Vigilante groups called *Amasinyora* and *Amambutho* which were active in KwaZulu, carried out attacks on opposers in coordination with Inkatha too (Afrikagrupperna i Sverige & ISAK, 1986; Sekhonyane, & Louw, 2002). Inkatha is still active as a political party in South Africa.

Vigilantes operated in other regions as well. In addition to Amasinyora and Amambunto located in Kwazulu, different Vigilante groups like *Mbokodo* and *Black Cats* in Mpumalanga (KwaNdebele), *Toaster Gang* in Gautent, *Amasolomozi*, *Witdoeke* and *Amadoda* in Western Cape, *Kekanas, Mememsi* and *AmaAfrika* in Eastern Cape, *Three Million Gang*, *Mabangalala* and *A-Team* (*Phakathis*) in Free State were carrying out attacks against opposing forces and killed thousands of people, burned their houses or forced them to leave their lands. In addition to regional, social, group-related and similar differences, financial privileges and opportunities to use force also played important role in the establishment of these paramilitary groups. The ANC and its branches did not remain silent to Vigilantes' attacks. According to a calculation, more than 90 percent of the deaths that occured as a result of "disturbances" until 1988 were somehow related to Vigilantes and retaliation to their attacks (Sekhonyane & Louw, 2002).

The racist government of South Africa created militia of the native people of Namibia, which under the invasion of South Africa, as a part of its goal of

"Namibianize" the war and these militia forces carried on their activities for years before the independence of Namibia. *South West African Territorial Force* (SWATF), which consisted of approximately 10,000 black and 10,000 white soldiers, supposedly established as an independent army like a branch of *South African Defence Force* (SADF) in 1980. A significant portion of this Namibian army was consisting of South African soldiers. Although it seemed as an independent army, the truth was that it was under the command of South African Army by all aspects and after its establishment, military service for Namibian men became obligatory. The mass migration out of Namibia started after this and as a result, mercenaries served in Namibia. In Namibia, attitudes of the tribes towards the colonialist South African regime was important in appointments, where 40 percent of the Namibian and 25 percent of the South African army consisted of black people (Afrikagrupperna i Sverige & ISAK, 1986) which also shows that the racist governments of the time made important progress in its "divide and rule" policies.

With the agreement signed between the ANC and the South African government of the time in 1994, Vigilantes lost their support of the state. The *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, which was found by the 1995 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Desmond Tutu, investigated the incidents both Vigilantes and opposing forces were involved with its various aspects for three years, as a part of the democratization process started with the agreement. Like in other cases, those who were abused by Vigilantes were not pleased with this process regarding Vigilante, however, the reconciliation process that country was going through lead to the unraveling of many incidents. According to the perspective that guides the Truth and Reconciliation Commission the problem was not limited to a general "amnesty" problem. Through this perspective, 3 subcommissions were formed: (1) unraveling of violations from past til that day, (2) providing the necessary compensation and rehabilitation opportunities and, in case of unraveling all the truth, (3) Bringing "amnesty" to the agenda. This practice presented by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its subcommissions, despite all the differences of the countries, can be a significant example to the Kurdish issue for similar steps that might be brought to agenda. Some questioning and investigation documents that also comprises Vigilantes (which can be found on the official website of the commission[2]), because of its fruitful outcomes, contains great lessons not just for this country, but for many countries that has gone through a similar process as well.

Other groups similar to Vigilante have emerged against various crimes and drug trafficking after 1994. According to research before and after 1994 it can be said that there is not a significant difference between the two periods regarding the arbitrary actions but only the targets changed (Harris, 2001, 2003; Sekhonyane & Louw, 2002). In other words, instead of having racist and political goals, crime and drug trafficking became the basis of these groups' actions. These new groups in South Africa, despite all the differences of the two countries, show great resemblances to those in Guatemala. Developments show that despite some changes in the political sphere, desire and attempt to maintain the "order" by putting themselves in the place of law persists in different forms and this might result in new social problems.

d. Iraq: Saladin Knights

The selected paramilitary organization of Iraq, is the organization known as the *Salah al-Din Knights* (Fursan Salah al-Din) [3]. This organization was established within the frame of *al-Fursan* (Knights) by the Iraqi regime of the time in Southern Kurdistan in 1963. Although the forms and and extents of these forces change with the characteristics of the periods, these forces existed *de facto* until the Kurdish uprising (*Raperin*) in 1991. Al-Fursan was established in 1963 and consisted of two divisions. One of these divisions was named *Saladin Knights*, which consisted solely of Kurdish people, and the other was *Khalid ibn al-Walid Knights* (Fursan Khalid ibn al-Walid), which consisted solely of Arabs (Zeick, 1997). Those who were a member of these paramilitary forces, which were related with the Iraqi regime, were called "Cahş" among Kurds, which literally means "donkey's foal" in English.

The period that witnessed the establishment of this organization is important. According to an initial pact signed between the Iraqi government and the Kurdish movement in 1963, national rights of the Kurds were going to be recognized within the frame of an autonomy. Kurds insisted that Kirkuk should belong to Kurdistan, but the government did not agree with them on this. Thus conflicts arose once again and the government used a recently established paramilitary organization named al-Fursan to increase its power against the Kurdish national movement (Zeick, 1997).

According to Martin van Bruinessen (1999), tribe leaders of Zebari, Bra-

dost, Lolan, Herki and Surchi, who were in dispute with Mele Mustafa Barzani or his allies of Kurdish fractions, were the first leaders to join the al-Fursan. Other tribe leaders followed, but their roles were not as big as theirs. The attitudes of the tribe leaders against the Kurdish movement, who were armed by the state, and their dependent forces are influenced more by the quality of their relations with Barzani or his Kurdish allies than the Iraqi government's decisions. At first, tribe leaders joined the al-Fursan, but later other battalions which did not consist of a certain tribe but rather based on charismatic leaders were established as well. In fact, an al-Fursan legion was established by a sheikh belonging to Qadiri order and his villager disciples in late 1970's and early 1980's and they were acting almost like, in practice, a tribe.

During the period of Autonomy agreement, March1970-1974, the al-Fursan units did not engage in activities and it seemed as if they were dissolved "de facto". Tribe leaders of the time who had a dispute with the Kurdish movement, settled in the cities under the control of the government. With the regaining momentum of the Kurdish national movement in late 1970's, al-Fursan, the Kurdish cavalry force in relation with the regime, revived.

In the summer of 1986, number of people who were enlisted in al-Fursan of Southern Kurdistan were approximately 150 thousands (some sources state that this number can even be 250 thousands). However, the actual number of those active was smaller, because people were enlisting in order to avoid summoning to Iraq-Iran war (1980-1988), which was still going on at that time, or other obligatory duties. As the Iran-Iraq war progressed, state supporter Kurdish legions were in relation with the *National Defence Battalions* (Qiyada Jahafil al Difaa al Watani) which was not very well armed. The payment and other expenses of these state-backed militia were paid through their commanders, also known as m*ustashars*. Number of mustashars varied according to the number of people enlisted. Number of mustashars who made great fortunes is not small. These were all factors that strengthened the mustashar's position as well (Human Rights Watch, 1993; McDowall, 1996; Bruinessen, 1999).

Regarding the actions of the Saladin Knights consisting of Kurds, it can be seen that they did not always oppose the Kurdish movement. In fact, Peshmerges were getting arms and other supplies from them (Bruinessen, 1999). Another source states that, the presence of Saddam regime in Kurdistan was almost nonexistent by the year of 1987 and the government and the military had

almost completely evacuated the area. There were al-Fursan forces under the command of a mustashar located on certain control points, however, they usually overlooked the Peshmerges'activities. But this did not last long and the *Anfal* campaign, which resulted in hundred thousands of people dying or going missing and some undersecretaries played active roles in this (Hiltermann, 2008).

The statements of Masoud Barzani, who is the current president of the federal government in Southern Kurdistan, in a 1991 interview also show the periodical differences in Kurdish troops which worked for the Saddam regime. Barzani stated that what is meant by "true Cahş's" is the "Cahş's" who existed before 1975, because they truly supported the state, however, things changed significantly after 1983. Barzani, who stated that they cannot include everyone to fight by their side and as a result they joined the light cavalry units of the regime, while emphasizing that most of the cahş's are discreetly connected to them (McDowall, 1996).

The process started as a result of the Anfal and Halabja masaccres, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the international reaction to this invasion, formed a "fracture" point for the significant portion of Kurds in al-Fursan, despite the involvement of a segment of mustashars in Anfal with the Iraqi army. It is due to this fact and similar reasons that, majority of mustashars and their men joined the uprising began in South Kurdistan in 1991 and played an important role in the uprising. This meant a disengagement from a "relation" that had been ongoing for decades. Since Saddam was in power at the time, The Kurdish front, which also comprised *Kurdistan Democratic Party* (Partiya Demokrata Kurdistanê, PDK), and *Patriotic Union of Kurdistan* (Yekîtiya Nişтimanî ya Kurdistanê, YNK), granted an amnesty to the mustashars who joined the uprising against Saddam and did not take any action, neither at that time, nor in the future, about those who chose to stay in Kurdistan, regarding the crimes commited under the control of Baas regime.

The power that mustashars had was later used to pull down the Saddam regime as well. United States also used the mustashars who kept in touch with the Saddam regime instead of joining the 1991 uprising. Mustashar Faris Sulayvani (Faris Silevani), who owns a tribal power of 50,000 people and had close ties with Saddam, fled to Ukraine through Turkey with his family, and then to United States through Germany in 1994, due to a dispute with the ministry of defense of the time, Ali Hassan Majid, who is also named by the Kurds as

"Chemical Ali" (Ali Kimyawi), due to his role in Halabja massacre. He then went to Syria with plans prepared by *Central Intelligence Agency* (CIA) to meet Iraqi senior officials and Arshad Zebari, a Kurdish who once served as a minister and shortly after, Zebari started contacting United States. Both Sulayvani and Zebari, were actively involved in Anfal at the time (Rosen, 2003). Zebari then went on to form a political party in accordance with Turkey, Syria and Iran's demands and kept serving the plans of these states (Rizgari Online, 2007).

Other organizations alongside Saladin Knights were established in Kurdistan as well. *Emergency forces* (Quwat al-Taware), which were active in cities and tasked against intelligence and "terrorism" under the control of Baas Party, were one of these organizations. *Special Units* (Mafarez Khaseh), which comprised Kurdish agents that were affiliated with the intelligence organization *Amn*, is another example. Despite all these forces being Kurds, they were trained to be hostile towards their own people during the Baas regime (Human Rights Watch, 1993). According to *Human Rights Watch* (1993), there were two aspects of the Iraqi regime's "divide and rule" policy. One of them was to deepen the separation within the leading Kurdish parties. The other was to enlist as many Kurdish people as possible to the state-backed paramilitary groups based on the tribal system and protect their interests in this way.

Although it has been 21 years since the uprising in Southern Kurdistan in 1991, the decision taken by the Kurdish Front regarding Mustashars is still valid. I personally heard about the certain "sensitivities" regarding the attitudes taken against the Mustashars during my stay in Southern Kurdistan in the first half of 1994 and witnessed how the Mustashars were maintaining their own system. A significant portion of the ex-Mustashars resort to different ways in order to protect their positions, such as allying themselves with the two most powerful parties (PDK and YNK) or establishing a political party just like some leaders of the Surchi tribe did.

Some ex-Mustashars are keeping their "silence" and trying to adjust to the current developments. However, the actions of the Mustashars against the Kurdish National Movement during the Saddam regime, including their actions in Anfal, which resulted in deaths of hundred thousands of Kurds and especially their economic and social status, is such a topic that, which has already been the agenda of the media organs a number of times before and is likely to be the agenda from time to time in the future as well.

e. Discussion and some concluding remarks

The purpose of this article was to investigate the other counties' experiences on the paramilitary organizations armed by the governments, and to provide an international ground of perspective for the past, current state and the future of the village guard system, which was launched by Turkey in Kurdistan in 1985. The practices of the countries summarized above show that, although the paramilitary organizations may have their uniquenesses due to the differences of the countries, there are great similiarities in the war policies followed by the Philippines, Guatemala, South Africa and Iraq.

The experiences of the countries rather show similarities with the *Critical Perspective* (Kowalewski, 1992). One of them is that the paramilitary units in question serve a small minority instead of the demands of the whole society. Another important indication is the dominant powers' attitude of resorting to paramilitarism in order to silence and oppress the opposing factions and using the paramilitary organizations to protect their own interests. Acting against the principle of transparency and responsibility with their secret involvements, arbitrariness, and putting themselves above the law are other important similarities. The oppresive regimes using paramilitary forces instead of traditional security forces also creates an opportunity for paramilitary forces to act in wider areas with lower economical costs.

Another conclusion that may be drawn from these case studies is the "universality" of the "divide and rule" policies with its contradictions and conflicts as a step of "internalization". Even though targeting civilians, arbitrary attitudes, taking advantage of status for personal or familial gains while serving under the state is the proof that both civilian and military administrations learn much from each other, this situation could also be interpreted as a coincidence due to the structure of oppression. For instance, there are similarities between the Turkish prime minister of the period Turgut Özal's vision of changing the demographic structure of the regions where PKK was active by means of migration in 1980s, and the discourse of the Guatemalan dictator Riot Montt in early 1980s, "draining the sea that the fish swim in". Similar statements such as Riot Montt's in a speech to a local public, "If you are with us, we'll feed you; if not, we'll kill you", were said many times when the village guard system was established in Kurdistan; Hakkâri, Van, and Siirt. (Aytar, 1992).

Forced enlistment to paramilitary organizations is frequently encountered especially in the Philippines, Guatemala and Iraq and similar situations are encountered during the establishment and expanding of the village guard system (Aytar, 1992). It is clearly seen especially in Philippines, Guatemala and Iraq that every action taken for putting down the developing acts of rebellions, including forced migration, evacuation and burning of regions with high guerilla activity, is considered legitimate. Similar examples can be seen during the development of the village guard system as well.

Another conclusion that can be reached from different country experiences is that when the paramilitary groups are sooner or later eliminated by the political agreements or change in regimes, the wounds they inflicted do not heal easily. For example, although the Truth and Reconciliation Commission listened to both sides of the war for years without differentiating between the government and the opposing side and reached to certain verdicts, the number of people from both sides who were not happy with the outcome was quite high. In Guatemala, despite certain ongoing investigations, an amnesty was usually seen enough by the governments, thus a general "confrontation" could not be realized, let alone the details of the conflicts that continued for decades. For this reason, still the leaders and the members of the paramilitary organizations can form new groups under different names and missions. As sometimes becomes an agenda in South Kurdistan, reactions against those who once took the guns of the Iraqi state become an agenda as well.

There are significant similarities between the incidents on the persistence of the paramilitary forces in the Philippines and Guatemala despite the government changes and the actions of the Turkish government regarding the Village Guard System since 1985. Apart from the money, personal and group activities, coercion and similar practices used in the formation of the paramilitary forces, there are significant similarities in the attitudes of the "civil" governments as well. Both during the period when junta who seized the power with the coup of September 12, 1980, supervised the government, and the following processes, the "civil" governments despite all the differences in their discourses, mainly kept the Village Guard System as it is and did not have any attempts on its abolishment. For this reason, it could be said that a solution regarding the Village Guard System is closely related to a democratic, peaceful, and just solution for the Kurdish issue, as the similar cases in South Africa and Guatemala demonstrated.

Notes

[1]The forces defined as paramilitary organizations in this article can have different names in different countries. Except for the special names given for their respective countries, this term will be used in this article. The term "organization" is used for all kinds of organization, movement, group and similar entities.

[2]For further information on the issue, please see the official website of Truth and Reconciliation Commission: http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/index.html

[3]It is an interesting fact that this paramilitary organization established in Iraq in 1963 was named after Saladin (Selaheddînê Eyyûbî'ye), the commander of the Islamic Army that vanquished the Crusaders.

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VI. EVALUATION

For about thirty years since its adoption in 1985, governments and the military have implemented the village guard system jointly and persistently. It has been presented not only as a tool to "fight against terrorism" but also a way to tackle the issue of unemployment in the region. Even the opposition parties in favor of abolishing the system came to realize, once in government, that what they are able to do is only to amend it. This "realization" is due as much to the complexities of a war against a guerilla organization whose superior knowledge of the terrain and organizational nature empowers them over the military as it is to the necessity of political parties to observe their relations with the tribes and the village guards as well as with the army.

There are signs that the intention behind the establishment of this paramilitary organization, akin to the Ottoman Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments, was, not only to use the village guards as an armed force but also as a tool for the assimilation of the Kurds. Furthermore, dividing the Kurds as 'pro-PKK' and 'pro-state' was a deliberate measure to prevent social cohesion, which might result in serious opposition. Another goal of the system, as stated in official documents, is to "use the Kurd against the Kurd" through a policy of divide and rule. Through this multi-purpose structure, the state hopes to achieve not only military control over the land but also a broader control in other aspects. Burning and destruction of villages that refuse to become guards and the exposure of villagers to all kinds of violence and ferocity is also a part of this plan. Through this process, the state hopes to eliminate any kind of villagers' cooperation with and transmission of information to the PKK. Logistic support is intended exclusively to the 'pro-statist' village guards.

The village guard system has, at times, served as the basis for the administrative, military and even economic structure of the region. Debates on the abolition of the system have come up in its first years of implementation due to the 'reluctance' of the villagers to become guards, the attempts of some guards to disarm and the rise of crime rates among the guards as well as their later involvement in 'serious crimes' such as drug trafficking. Debates have been intensified as the guards were targeted by the PKK, thus their effect diminished and as rumors rose of the guards helping the PKK. Yet the debates came to nothing and the system still continues to be an integral part of the policy of the

'fight against terrorism,' especially in the beginning of 1990s when this policy was implemented rigorously.

When debates on the abolition of the system were replaced with those favoring its reform, it is possible to think that the state looked for ways to get rid of the guards silently and 'without damage.' The reform of the system is usually understood as responding to the demands of the guards, especially the ones concerning their personnel rights, and improving their conditions. The fact that the guards, who were former farmers and ranchers, do not have the possibility of returning back to their previous occupations and the fear of the reaction of the villagers due to their past crimes do not make it possible to get rid of the village guards silently. The opposition parties advocate openly the abolition of the system through disarmament of the guards and their employment in other areas. On the other hand, the governing parties took into consideration the number of the guards, their variety and the complex relation between the military, village guards and the state, and usually tried to take the issue off the agenda silently. The fact that the recruitment of guards still continue while giving statements regarding the abolition of the system is a sign that the state does not really want to abandon this versatile and multi-functional paramilitary structure.

On the other hand, the memories of the events during the abolition of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments still remain fresh. Once called 'heroes' and equipped with all kinds of material and moral support, the tribe members who made up the Regiments were eliminated when the government changed and they were no longer needed. The Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments are an example of the fact that the privileges of belonging to an organization designed for a policy of divide-and-rule are not permanent and that things can get complicated when there is no longer a need for such organizations or when such organizations can be made up of different people.

Parliamentary groups –noting that not all members of a party have to think alike- can be divided into two groups when it comes to the issue of village guards. On one hand, there are those that see the system as a historical necessity which is the very justification of its existence. For this group the main benefit of the system is 'deterrence.' Consisting of mainly conservative and ruling parties, this group insists that misconduct is a rare occurrence and is dealt with in courts, the guards should have all social rights and securities of civil servants and should be eligible to officially become martyrs. They also see the

social system based on tribalism in the region as beneficial to the state and to the political parties.

On the other hand, there are MP's who oppose the system of armament of the people, which empowers some sections of the tribal system while it leaves others between two fires. This group points out the recruitment criteria of the guards and underlines the fact that the supposedly 'voluntary' and 'temporary' system has become 'compulsory' and 'permanent'. As well as expressing doubts about crimes committed by the guards, these MP's state that armament of the people cannot be a tool to fight 'terrorism' and it is against the Constitution's social state and rule of law principles. There are peripheral parties composed of MP's that are mostly leftist and from the region who fear that such structures establish authoritarian and military relationships which also nurtures guerilla tendencies within the state and paves the way for fundamental human rights abuses and other anti-democratic occurrences. It is evident that there are similarities between the point of view of the parties on the village guard system and their opinions on the issues of democracy and human rights, the state-citizen relations, army-politics relations and the Kurdish issue.

We know from news articles, victim testimonies and lawsuits, Parliament's investigation reports and even from the book the village guards themselves wrote that the guards have been involved in crimes such as trafficking, manslaughter, rape and trespassing using the arms and power that the state provided. There are guards who have been fired and sued for these crimes but most are protected by the state and still work. It is possible then, to state that through randomly covering up or excessively punishing guards' crimes, the state is practicing an arbitrary hegemony over them and effectively stirring up the situation even more.

The fact that the village guards are labeled as 'criminals' demonstrates that the whole system is exploited by the state. For those who have been forced to be a guard, it constitutes a crime to 'inaccurately' shoot their weapon or to return their arms and ask to be let go. On the other hand, the state *had to* bring to court those with excessive account of crimes such as mugging, manslaughter and rape. Most of them, though, enjoy impunity. They have been exploited by the state in unappropriated illegal activities. The politicians use tribe leaders and village guards similarly and it seems that these people are caught in a web they cannot get out of even if they wanted to. A similar entrapment is present for

those guards who were first targeted and then were pardoned.

Previous work done in this field and field research we have undertaken as part of this work, gave us the opportunity to listen to the village guards and their families about their opinions on the village guard system. The most important conclusions of this research is that a general definition of a village guard cannot be made. There are different viewpoints covering a very broad spectrum, on subjects like the village guard system, the state, the PKK, the Kurdish identity and their roles in this system, among villagers who volunteered as village guards, and other villagers who were forced to be village guards for different reasons. It is not possible to create a common category for a tribal leader who made an agreement with the army, enrolled all his tribe in the village guard system and was involved in crimes, with other people who become village guards, after facing the threats of the gendarmerie such as "be a village guard, or leave your village; if you do not leave, we will burn it down", and who had no money even to leave their village, so were afraid of suffering with their children in a new place. These differences become visible especially in opinions about the elimination of the village guard system. Most of the village guards who were involved in crimes demand the continuation of the system, or do not want to disarm thinking that there will be people who want to take revenge against them for the atrocities they committed, or they want protection and assurances against such incidents. It is obvious that the fears of village guards who were involved in crimes will make this elimination process more difficult. On the other hand, most of the village guards who were forced to enroll in the system, who have not committed atrocities or taken part in repressive actions, maintain that they are ready to leave their arms immediately.

Certainly, the incidents caused by the village guards as individuals, have to be evaluated on case-by-case basis. However, this system is not a simple structure that was formed by individual initiatives, on the contrary it is an organized system formed with definite objectives in mind; therefore it has be evaluated on a comprehensive/integrated basis. Because on one hand the the village guards are perpetrators and tools of gruesome crimes and unlawful actions, on the other hand they are victims of a policy which aims the social-cultural destruction of Kurdish social life. This integrated approach has to be adopted also in the elimination process and this process has to be realized in a certain planned, systematic way – this is one the essential requirements of the condi-

tions that will enable two societies to live together. It is obvious that a social life that is free from militarism will not be possible in a society where paramilitary organizations continue to exist, in an open or hidden way.

Another clear issue is the social, political and economical destruction that the village guard system caused. In many villages, the village guards and the villagers which faced the atrocities and the repression of the village guards are living together. The reparation of these harmed social relations cannot be realized by monetary compensations. Also, some of the lands and houses of the villagers forced to leave have been occupied by the village guards. These rights violations should also be rectified.

The state forces that have established the village guard system by force and by using violence, have harmed the natural resources of the region. Production is near to none in villages that have been empty for years or which have been occuppied by village guards. This deep economical destruction will need many years to rectify. It is obvious that serious work and effort is needed for this.

We had mentioned that one of the secondary objectives of the state while establishing the village guard system was *assimilation*, despite the "security" angle being paramount. Research results show that the official policy has been unsuccesful in reaching this objective. On the contrary, state officials and soliders have nearly always reminded the village guards that being Kurdish means being a second class citizen. The suspicion against the Kurdish village guards and the continuous contempt expressed in the soldier-village guard relations is causing reactions in village guards. The efforts of the state to create a "pro-statist" populace when embarking the formation of the village guard system, has backlashed, because discriminatory practices have been common even against people who were on their side. A big majority of Kurds, who have worked as village guards, by being forced to, or as volunteers, are feeling cheated in the state-soldier-village guard relationship.

The village guard system has negatively affected all social relations in the Kurdish society, not only the relations between the village guards and their victims. Especially the children of village guards, who had no choice about the village guard system, are paying the price of their fathers' actions by being isolated, scorned and even by being subjected to occasional violence. In the same way, the wives of the village guards, who had no choice about the matter, have paid a price by waiting their husbands' unknown return from operations for many

years, and some of the women had to shoulder the burden of the family after their husbands died in operations.

It is obvious that eliminating the village guard system and repairing the wounds that it caused cannot be only realized by giving village guards their personal rights and work opportunities, and by giving minimum compensation to the victims (in any case, the state even is not mentioning such a compensation).

Below we will list some issues which have to be given attention to, in the process of elimination of the village guard system. Of course these have to be further developed and worked on, within a comprehensive, planned and systematic approach.

- The arms and all privileges of the village guards should be taken away, and the village guard system should be completely dissolved.
- Village guards who have committed crimes against civilians should be immediately taken to the court.
- It should be ensured that the village guards systematically leave the lands and the houses they occupied.
- The personnel rights of the village guards should be given, other employment opportunities should be presented to those who are of working age.
- Definite measures should be taken to ensure that people who were and still are village guards will not work in security and guarding jobs like rangers, school security, petrol line guarding, and they do not work in any jobs that require them to have arms or which give them privileges over others.
- Uncontrolled arms trade, which increase the risk of paramilitary structures being re-formed and getting into action again, should be controlled by a system which also includes non-govermental organizations.
- A multi-party reconciliation agreement should be arranged between PKK and the village guards as well as the village guards and the villagers to the effect that there will be no revenge actions after the village guards disarm.
- All kinds of legal measures should be taken to prevent the re-formation of a paramilitary system in the country.